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DOCTRINE OF ŚAKTI IN INDIAN LITERATURE

By

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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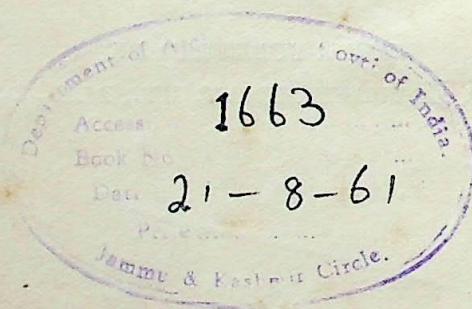
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FOREWORD

In this work the late Professor Prabhat Chandra Chakravarti attempts to give a historical outline of the doctrine of Śakti in Sanskrit literature. Owing to his premature death, the work is not completed. It has not had the benefit of the author's revision. Even in this fragmentary condition, it bears evidence of the author's delicate scholarship and careful discrimination. I have no doubt that it will be found very valuable to all students of Indian religion and philosophy.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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Calcutta.

PREFATORY NOTE

The following pages contain a posthumous work of Dr. Prabhat Chandra Chakravarti, M.A., P.R.S., PH.D., Kāvya-tīrtha, Asutosh Professor of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta. This constitutes the introductory instalment of his proposed comprehensive investigation into the Philosophy of the Tantras. Dr. Chakravarti died when the work was in the press, with pages 1-112 printed off and the remaining portion in proof or manuscripts. It is issued in the form in which it was left by the author, without any additions and alterations, as a humble tribute to his memory. Though the work is not actually complete, it is complete so far as it goes. The learned author proposed to summarise and elucidate the views of different branches of Indian Literature regarding *Śakti*. But the cruel hand of death snatched him away when he had almost finished the work, with only a small, but highly important, section left to be treated. It is a pity Dr. Chakravarti was not spared to give a finishing touch to his work by writing the chapter on Śākta Tantra literature and by recording his concluding remarks. But the labours of the late lamented scholar will be amply rewarded if the work serves to direct the attention of students of Indian Philosophy to the need and possibilities of a thorough and comparative study of the philosophical doctrines of the Tantras.

A short life-sketch of the author with special reference to his literary activities is given below :

Dr. Prabhat Chandra came of a family of Brahmin Pandits of Vikramapura in the district of Dacca. He was the fourth and youngest son of Pandit Ram-manikya Vidhyabhusana. He was born on April 7, 1890.

He received his early education at the K. L. Jubilee School of Dacca wherefrom he passed his Matriculation Examination in 1910. He then joined the Jagannath College and passed the Intermediate Examination in Arts in 1912.

He graduated from the Dacca College in 1914, standing first among successful candidates with Honours in Sanskrit. He took his M.A. in Sanskrit (Group A) in 1916 again occupying the first position in his group.

Soon after passing the M.A. Examination he was appointed a Lecturer in Sanskrit in the St. Xaviers College where he worked only for a few months after which he joined the newly constituted Post-Graduate Department of the Calcutta University as a Lecturer in Sanskrit. He held this latter post for about 17 years till he was appointed Asutosh Professor of Sanskrit in September 1934—a distinction which he could enjoy barely for a year, for he died on 2nd September, 1935, at the early age of 45.

It was his connection with the newly constituted Post-Graduate Department of the University which had took upon itself the noble task of encouraging advanced research work, that fostered in Dr. Chakravarti a spirit of research. Actuated by this spirit he set himself to a critical and systematic study of the grammatical concepts of the Hindus, as well as the philosophical outlook of the Tantras. The results of this study are reflected in numerous papers written in English, Bengali and Sanskrit, some of which were elaborated in one or other of his three separate books, including the one issued herewith. In recognition of his grammatical studies he was awarded by the University of Calcutta, in quick succession in 1921 and 1924, the Premchand Roychand Research Studentship and the Doctorate of Philosophy.

A list of the literary productions of Dr. Chakravarti is appended herewith.

Bethune College,
June, 1940.

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CHINTAHARAN CHAKRAVARTI

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INTRODUCTION

To offer an exhaustive interpretation of the doctrine of *śakti* is really difficult, if not absolutely impossible. One can hardly pretend to do full justice to a subject like this. Relating, as it does, to the region of both mind and matter, the doctrine of *śakti* comprises within itself a vital and a comprehensive problem that has been accorded a remarkable place in Indian literature. What we propose to do in the following pages is mainly to show how the problem of *śakti* presented itself to the various schools of Indian thought, and how particularly a respectable section of Indian religion came to worship *śakti* as Divine Mother or Supreme Godhead.

The sources from which materials have been drawn in building up the edifice of *śaktivāda* comprise, in a sense, the whole range of our ancient literature. The *Tantras*, specially the *śākta-tantras* and the *Purāṇas* are among the noteworthy branches of our literature that particularly provide by far the largest amount of materials as are necessary for making a thorough-going enquiry into the various aspects of *śaktivāda*.

Śakti is a mysterious thing: it seems to be more divine than mundane. Considered either as a distinct category of thought or as an inherent property of matter, *śakti* is an entity about the existence of which nobody feels any doubt. It is at once the essence and life of all things. *Śakti* has both visible and subtle forms. While the phenomenal world unfolds to our naked eyes the visible workings of *śakti*, the domain of intellect evidently shows the subtle operation of internal stimuli acting

upon the mind. *Śakti* makes its presence felt everywhere in nature. Normally it comes to our apprehension through the operation of causes, movement of bodies, manifestation of energy and so on. But this is not all that we have got to say about *śakti*. *Śakti* is believed to be the conscious element that dwells in us all. There is a plane, sublime and mystic, where *śakti* reveals itself as Pure Consciousness (*parā samvit*) and appears as the benign Mother creating and protecting the whole world. This universal motherhood of *śakti* is, in particular, an aspect that has rendered *śakti-tattva* so impressive and agreeable an idea as to commend itself at once to all humanity. There is evidence to believe that *śakti*, either as the Great Mother or the Goddess of Victory, was worshipped by most of the primitive peoples in days of yore.

Śāktaism, like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, is one of the ancient religions of India. The worship of *śakti* as a supreme divinity has long been in vogue in this land. It cannot, however, be definitely stated when the *śakti*-cult came into existence, and how the different manifestations of *śakti* developed into deities of popular worship. It is no doubt true that the personification of *śakti* was already an accomplished fact when people took to *śakti*-worship in its present form. One will find more than one abstract deity in the polytheistic religion of the Vedas, but none of them, we believe, could in a later period come into so much prominence as *śakti*. The conception of *śakti* as all-powerful Divine Mother is essentially Indian and can be traced back to a much older period than that of the Purāṇas and the *Tantras*. Some goddesses are mentioned in the Vedas (Agnāyī, Vāk¹, Idā, Rudrāṇī and others),

¹ Vāk and Sarasvatī are found to have passed into deities (see R. V., VIII. 100. 11. and A. V., v. 25. 6.). Yāska derives the word *Sarasvatī* as referring to both the goddess and the river so called. *Vāk* is often called

but there is no evidence if they could command regular worship just like the different embodiments of *śakti*¹, viz., Kālī, Durgā, etc. One cannot, however, regard this embodiment of *śakti* as the creation of Paurāṇic mythology, since the names like Kālī, Karālī and Umā (as the daughter of Himālaya or one of golden complexion) are to be found in the authentic Upaniṣads². The name *Ambikā* together with that of Rudra also occurs in the Vedas³.

The Vedic hymns disclose a primitive mentality—a mentality of subordination and helplessness—which induced the people to glorify the forces of nature and to sing in praise of those elements over which they had no control. Finding themselves exposed to all the whims and freaks of nature, the primitive people were compelled to invoke the mercy of Fire, Water and other mighty forces of nature for the obvious reason of their own protection. These powerful agents (*prākṛta-śakti*) afterwards developed into *devatās* and became in no time worthy of popular worship. Men in the very dawn of their religious awakening seem to have been alive to the existence of the spirit behind the panorama of nature. This awareness was not without its effect. Nature with all her strange phenomena made a deep and peculiar impression upon their untutored mind.

devī (*Vāgdevī*) in the R̥gveda. The Atharva Veda also mentions such goddesses as *Subhagā devī* and *Madhumatī devī*.

¹ Most of the Vedic gods have their female consorts. But those that are mentioned as the wives of Rudra or Śiva became pre-eminently the objects of worship in later times. While Nārāyaṇī or Lakṣmī represents the *śakti* of Viṣṇu and Brahmāṇī that of Brahman, Rudrāṇī, Bhavāṇī, Ambikā, etc. are regarded as the *śakti* of Śiva.

² *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 1. 2. 4. and *Kenopaniṣad*, 3. 12.

³ एष ते रुद्र भागः सह खलाम्बिकया—*Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, 3. 57.

What they felt within was the awful presence of a divine power presiding over everything, visible and invisible. Thus, what we call 'Worship of Nature' is not absolutely childish or insignificant from the Indian point of view, because it represents a type of religious fervour that seems to have been based upon the recognition of the supremacy of *śakti*. That all phenomena are the working of an invisible power is a very old idea of Indian theology. Indians had early grasped a truth—the truth that whatever we see around us is a vivid display of *śakti*. Our attempt will be, as far as possible, to elucidate this truth.

Śāktaism, as we all know, stands upon the solid rock of *śaktivāda*, interpreting *śakti* as the highest principle and as the only reality in world-process. The doctrine of *śakti* and all that has been said about it afford an extensive field of study. Very few doctrines seem to have received so much intensive and elaborate treatment at the hands of Indian thinkers. For an adequate study of Śāktaism, one must make a comprehensive survey of the doctrine of *śakti* in all its bearings. As Śāktaism is essentially connected with the doctrine of *śakti*, we think it profitable to give an analysis of *śaktivāda*. An exposition of this doctrine will reveal to us a dynamic world in which *śakti* plays the most important rôle.

Śakti is the root of all. Nothing exists that lies beyond the domain of *śakti*. The *śāktas* in their introspection have recognised only one substance, *viz.*, *śakti* which is considered to be the ultimate world-stuff out of which things are born and shaped. *Śakti* is the potent factor that moulds the universe and causes all sorts of diversities. This assumption brings us to a vital

point by doing away with the duality of matter and spirit as well as of cause and effect. The so-called division of entities into inert and intelligent is of no consequence to those who are trained to look upon everything as the manifestation of *śakti*. The doctrine of *śakti* thus removes all barriers that have conventionally kept the two realms of thought separate from each other.

The domain of science has opened the gate of a kingdom where *śakti* not only reigns supreme but makes itself felt in all vividness. Every advance in science has been a distinct step towards a better realisation of the parts played by *śakti* in all phenomena of nature. The doctrine of *śakti* is being interpreted, though in a different line, by the rapid progress of science, and it is not unlikely that this interpretation will once go a long way in strengthening the sublime conception of *śakti*.

Science is gradually reaching a stage in its analysis of matter where *śakti* bids fair to be the ultimate basis of all things. What exists behind the subtle region of electrons or protons, and what finally accounts for the very life of all organisms will be once explained as nothing but *śakti*. To demonstrate this fundamental truth is sure to be the crowning success of all scientific investigations.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Although we have not yet dealt with the different forms of *śakti*, and particularly with the most important aspect of *śakti* as revealed in the *śākta-tantras*, the foregoing discussions seem to have brought us to a stage where we can attempt to give a definition of *śakti*, however provisional and tentative it might be. It is difficult to define precisely what *śakti* is. First, because the notion of *śakti* is purely an abstract one. Secondly, we can hardly think of *śakti* independently of objects that exhibit it; it is matter itself and not its inherent or natural power that usually comes to our vision and leaves its impression upon the mind. We shall find, as we proceed, that *śakti* is not pure abstraction but distinguishable and definable on its own merits. It is also possible to conceive *śakti* in isolation from objects.

Looked at from different standpoints, *śakti* will appear to have various connotations. The commonplace way of defining *śakti* is this: *śakti* implies the activity of matter or the inherent power of objects. It is the same as force which is exhibited by things under certain conditions. *Śakti* is also said to be the power that is necessary for performing or producing something. A thing evinces its dormant *śakti* while it is in the way of transforming itself into a new phenomenon. What we call *kāraṇa* (cause) is nothing but an object having the power of producing an effect. But we should remember that to define *śakti* either as force or energy, power or strength, does not fully bring out the sense in which *śakti* is generally understood by the *śāktas* and other schools

of Indian thought. The commonplace definition would rather take us very far from the true perspective of *śakti*.

Śakti is defined by some as the very nature of a thing¹. One school of thought has gone so far as to declare that *śakti* is the ultimate essence of all things, making all that we perceive mere images or embodiments of *śakti*². Some have recognised *śakti* as a distinct category of thought like substance and quality³. To some, on the other hand, *śakti* is not a separate entity detachable from the substance in which it inheres, but is only an inseparable property of matter. There are others who have made no distinction between *śakti* and *śaktimat* (*śakti* and the thing that possesses *śakti*)⁴.

The above, as we have reason to believe, is only a secular interpretation of *śakti* as opposed to the spiritual one. According to this matter-of-fact view, the utmost we can say about *śakti* is that it is simply the property of matter, and consequently devoid of all spiritual significance. There seem to be generally two forms of *śakti*, namely, *cit* (spiritual) and *acit* (material). The former is related to the mind and the latter to the inert body.

The connotation of the term *śakti* is so complex and multifarious that a definition cannot be so ingeniously framed as would apply to all cases. The existence as well as importance of *śakti* is admitted by all but there is some difference of manner in which the notion of *śakti* has been generally expressed. *Śakti*, as we shall find, has been variously denominated in different departments of science and art. Though the exact term does not actually

¹ शक्तिर्द्रव्यादिस्वरूपमेव—*Saptapādārthi*, 56.

² This is the view held by the grammarian.

³ *Prabhākara* and the author of the *Daśapādārthi*.

⁴ The *Sāṃkhya* view of *śakti* (शक्तिशक्तिमतोरभेदः).

occur everywhere, every department of knowledge has used some such words as would unmistakably convey almost the same sense as *śakti*.

To give a few examples. The biological science has used the word 'vitalism' or vital power instead of *śakti*. To the Vaiśeṣika *paramāṇu*, described as 'the subtle but active element without form,'¹ is as good as a kind of *śakti*; to the chemist *śakti* means the active atom that enters into the constitution of matter; to the physicist *śakti* is either energy or moving electrons that constitute the ultimate nucleus of matter; to the psychologist *śakti* signifies stimuli that act upon the mind; to the Buddhist *śakti* is the same as perfect wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*); to the *yogins* and mystics *śakti* implies that spiritual power by virtue of which individual souls get themselves united with the Supreme Being; to the idealist *śakti* means consciousness; to the rhetorician *śakti* is synonymous with poetical genius²; to the Āgamika *śakti* is identical with *pratibhā* or flash of divine light (wisdom).

The scope of *śakti* comprises both the internal and the external world. Mind is a great centre of *śakti*, and the operation of *śakti* within the sphere of the mind is not less perceptible than the display of *śakti* in the outer world. Our account of *śaktivāda* will not be complete and worthy of serious study till the spiritual aspect of *śakti* is prominently brought to light. *Cit-śakti*, as we shall see later on, is *śakti par excellence*, *acit-śakti* being only a grosser modification of it. *Acit* has to be dependent on *cit* in so far as the manifestation of its activity is concerned. Though endowed with *śakti*, things that are inert cannot exert their inherent power

1 निरवयवः क्रियावान् परमाणुः—*Saptapādārthā*, 103.

2 शक्तिः कवित्वबीजस्वरूपः संस्कारविशेषः—*Kāvyaprakāśa*, *Kār*, 3.

unless and until they are set to work by something that is *cit* or conscious.¹

Cit-śakti in its all-embracing aspect found a beautiful expression in the *śākta-tantras*. To the Śāktas *śakti* is divine : it is called Pure Consciousness (*caitanya*) and Supreme Power (*parā śakti*) that lies in and out, and regulates the world-mechanism making itself felt every moment through all our efforts—physical and mental. The *Tantras* have exalted *śakti* in the highest possible terms, and have personified *śakti* in the shape of the Great Mother. The *śākta* creed, as postulated by the *Tantras*, tends to make the world an embodiment of *śakti*. *Śakti* is said to be the ultimate reality that lies at the background of all phenomena. It is held that things have their origin in *śakti* and dissolve into the same on the destruction of their finite forms. *Śakti* is eternal and infinite, having neither beginning nor end. It is often styled *ādyā śakti*, i. e., the primordial power out of which the world has evolved.

The main point in which the Śāktas have differed from others in their outlook on, and interpretation of, *śakti* is sufficiently clear. The Śāktas have assigned to *śakti* a far-reaching significance, maintaining a position not compatible with the idea of those that look upon *śakti* purely from a secular point of view. The doctrine of *śakti*, as expounded by the *Tantras*, comprises in itself a great principle of spiritual life and brings us to wider issues and stirring revelations. The whole world, it is maintained, is the manifestation of *śakti* : all that we see is made up of *śakti* ; all that moves and breathes is a display of *śakti*.

¹ अचेतनस्य कारणस्य सचेतनाधिष्ठानेनैव कार्यजनकत्वात्—Haridāsa on Kusumāñjali, Kār. 3. Cf. नाचेतनं लोके चेतनानधिष्ठितं स्वतन्त्रं.....दृष्टम्—Śaṅkara under Brahmasūtra, 2. 2. 1.

Śakti, as we have been contending all along, has both transcendent and immanent character. There is an inexhaustible stock from which evolves all that possesses power. If a synthesis of all phenomena, whether dynamic or static, were ever possible, we would have certainly found out a region of *absolute śakti*—a region where *śakti* is free from all limitations of time and space. This will lead us to the conviction of a Being so perfect and complete as to possess all varieties of *śakti*. He is rightly called *sarvaśakti* and *paripūrṇaśakti*¹ by the Vedāntin. Fulness of power is said to be an outstanding feature of his Lordship. The Śaiva teachers have raised the position of *śakti* to a great height by postulating the theory 'शक्त्यश्च जगत् कृत्स्नम्' (the whole universe is verily the manifestation of *śakti*)². The same proposition is maintained by Bhartṛhari while he states that the world with all its diversities is composed of the subtle units of *śakti* (*śaktimātrā*)³.

Closely connected with this proposition is the viewpoint of the *Tantras*. It is emphatically asserted that the *mahāśakti* transcends the limits of time and space, and that the visible world is only a materialised reflection taken from *śakti* that permeates all. When we speak of the dependence of matter on *śakti* and ordinarily perceive that all matters involve some degree of *śakti* or activity, we come round to the point from which we started, *viz.*, *śakti* lies at the root of all.

Knowledge is as much a *śakti* as nescience is. While the former acts like a *śakti* by illuminating the mind and

¹ परिपूर्णशक्तिरन्तु ब्रह्म न तस्यान्येन केनचित् पूर्यता सम्पादयितव्या—Ś. B. under Brahmasūtra, 2. 1. 24.

² Vārttika under Sivasūtra, 6.

³ शक्तिमात्रासमूहस्य विश्वस्यानेकधर्मणः ।—*Vākya-padīya*, 3.2 (Sādhana-samuddeśa).

widening the bounds of experience, the latter exerts itself not less forcibly by hiding the truth from our vision (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) and causing the distraction of the mind (*vikṣepa-śakti*). What obscures our vision, that is, prevents us from having a true perspective of things, is generally called *māyā-śakti*. Though it has no independent existence of its own in a transcendental sense, *māyā* is held to be so very indispensable a thing that the Lord cannot translate His scheme into action without its assistance¹.

A lofty conception of *śakti* as we have just reviewed came to act upon the religious susceptibilities of the Indian mind. This all-pervading aspect of *śakti* with the deep impression it left upon the religious attitude of life gave birth to a system of sacred faith—a faith which claims *śakti* as the highest divinity and counts the largest number of adherents in its fold. *Śakti* was conjured up with all reverence and devotion. Time came when *śakti* as the Benign Mother began to be worshipped in various forms by a large section of the Hindu community. A sacred and serene atmosphere, favourable to the growth of the *śakti*-cult, was thus gradually created in the proverbial land of religions. The worshippers of *śakti* are supposed to be living in a world where *śakti* is the sovereign ruler.

What we often forget in estimating the nature and importance of *śakti* is its essential aspect. A pure vision resulting from *sādhana* is said to be necessary to grasp the ultimate nature of *śakti*. *Śakti* is not a lifeless abstraction or a grosser kind of kinetic energy : it is what constitutes both the subjective and the objective world of ours. The mind, as we have already pointed out, with its triple function of thinking, willing and feeling, is a great centre of

¹ न हि तया विना परमेश्वरस्य स्रष्टृत्वं सिध्यति, शक्तिरहितस्य तस्य प्रवृत्त्यनुपपत्तेः—
Ś. B. under Brahmasūtra, 1. 4. 3.

śakti; and it is therefore aptly described as *manana-śakti*¹. Though found in a substance, inert as we call it, *śakti* means a living force—the spirit that moves in us all. One that dwells in all in the form of *cit* or *caitanya* is considered to be the perfect type of *śakti*². He is said to be the repository of infinite and incomprehensible power (*acintya-śakti*), there being none to overrule or overcome *Him*³.

The entire fabric of science, we may be emboldened to assert, is based upon *śakti*. Heat, Light, Electricity, Sound etc., which constitute the main features of physical science, are phenomena that manifest *śakti* in various ways. Energy, whether *potential* or *kinetic*, is nothing but *śakti*. The very conception of matter takes us at once to the consideration of *śakti*. Newton's theory of gravitation, which has of late been reduced to a Law of Geometry by Prof. Einstein, serves to illustrate how 'an attractive force (*śakti*) operates between all particles of matter.' The distinguished Professor has, however, done away with *śakti* or force by introducing a space-time theory (geometrical concepts) in order to explain the motion of bodies. To the *śaktivādin*, we should remember, time and space (*dik* and *kāla*) are reducible to a form of *śakti* that permeates all spheres of existence⁴. It cannot, however, be denied that

¹ *Manah* and *cit* are very often respectively called *manana-śakti* and *cit-śakti* in the language of philosophy. 'Power of the mind', 'soul-force' and 'will-force' are similar expressions indicative of the various functions of *śakti* within the internal region. The drift is that all faculties, external or internal behave in such a way as if they are capable of being expressed in terms of *śakti*.

² चिच्छक्तिः परमेश्वरस्य विमला चैतन्यमेवोच्यते ।—*Samkṣepaśārīraka*.

³ '*acintya-śakti*' is one of the six attributes that are applied to the Supreme Lord :

सर्वज्ञता वृत्तिरनादिबोधः स्वतन्त्रता नित्यमलुप्तशक्तिः ।

अचिन्त्यशक्तिश्च विभोर्विधिज्ञाः षडादुरङ्गानि महेश्वरस्य ॥—*Vāyupurāṇa*. 12. 31.

⁴ Bhartṛhari seems to be one of those Indian thinkers who have visualised everything as materialised form of *śakti*. In his philosophy time and space

atoms in their very structure, combination and movement exhibit *śakti*. The doctrine relating to the indestructibility of matter brings to the Hindus nothing more than the fact that the essence of *śakti* is never liable to destruction. It is the form that changes, but the essence remains always intact.

Now it will be our attempt to elucidate the ways in which *śakti* has been delineated by different systems of Indian philosophy. One will find from the subsequent enquiries that the doctrine of *śakti* has been mainly approached from two different standpoints, namely, material or grosser (*acit*) and spiritual or higher (*cit*). *Śakti* in its material aspect represents the capacity retained by a body for doing some kind of work. To use a scientific expression, *śakti* is both *potential* and *kinetic* energy. It is matter that is supposed to be the vehicle of *śakti*, but there is still a higher level from which *śakti* might be viewed as the essence of all things. What pre-eminently appealed to the *Śāktas* is this sublime aspect of *śakti*.

are treated as *śakti* (Cf. कालशक्तिमुपाश्रिताः—*Vākya-padīya*, 1. 3. and शक्तिर्दिगिति कथ्यते—3. 3.). *Kriyā* that pertains to things is also termed *śakti* (क्रियापि द्रव्यपरतन्त्रा शक्तिरिति व्यपदिश्यते—*Helārāja*).

ŚAKTI IN VEDIC LITERATURE

Let us start with the earliest period of Indian literature and see how *śakti* appealed to the primitive mind. *Śakti* occupies a considerable place in Vedic literature, particularly in the characterisation of gods. Indians, in a sense, have been worshippers of *śakti* from the very beginning of their religious consciousness. Nothing excited their greater wonder than the inscrutable display of *śakti* all around. The deities before which their forefathers bent their heads in all solemnity and to whom they offered their prayers were objects possessing wonderful power so much so as to rouse a feeling of deep reverence in them. The hymns of the Vedas may be studied as a genuine expression of this type of religious zeal. The first gods invoked by the Vedic seers were the resplendent *Uṣas* and the shining Sun, each exhibiting considerable activity or power, the former by dispelling the darkness and the latter by illuminating the world and infusing the very life into all creatures. The sun-god is a positive source of immense power, his appearance in the sky makes the whole world pulsate with life and energy. This is a fact that accounts for the sun-god being described as the soul of the movable and immovable world¹. Another god that made his powers felt in all vividness is Agni. *Vāk*, the vehicle of communicating ideas, is a power that rises from within. The ṛṣis have not only spoken of *vāk*² as a creation of the gods, but denominated it as *devī* (goddess). *Vāk* may, therefore, be fitly called a kind of *śakti*, since it serves one of our most essential needs. All

¹ सूर्य आत्मा जगत्स्तस्थुश्च—Rgveda, I. 115. 1.

² देवी वाचमजनयन्त देवास्तां विश्वरूपा पशवो वदन्ति ।—Rgveda, VIII. 100. 11.

faculties, whether external or internal, all that functions within or without, might be explained as different aspects and manifestation of *śakti*. The pulsation of life, as is exhibited by all animals, is nothing but a manifestation of *śakti*. We can go further and say that the movement as well as mutual attractions of bodies are simply due to the operation of *śakti*. All that happens shows only the unfolding of *śakti*. Expressions like *prāṇa-śakti*¹ (vital power), *buddhi-śakti* (power of intelligence), *vāk-śakti* (power of speech), *icchā-śakti* (power of will), *jñāna-śakti*² (power of knowledge) etc. will serve as best examples to bring home the fact that each and every form of activity is capable of being interpreted in terms of *śakti*.

The *devatās* described in the Vedas are all embodiments of *śakti*. Each and every god represents a kind of power which is peculiar to him. Particular functions have also been assigned to each of them. Indra, for instance, is a powerful god, being disperser of clouds and wielder of thunderbolts. Any deed that requires considerable strength for its accomplishment is said to be the work of Indra³. How one and the same god (Varuṇa) assumes different forms by virtue of *śakti* has been stated in an exceedingly beautiful way⁴. The *gāyatrī* is intrinsically a hymn that eulogises the sacred power (*savitur vareṇyam bhargah*) whereby *savitṛ* guides the intelligence of all sentient beings⁵. Viṣṇu is another

¹ Bhartṛhari has particularly referred to these two forms of *śakti*—
तस्य प्राणे च या शक्तिर्या च बुद्धौ व्यवस्थिता ॥—*Vākya-padīya*, 1. 118.

² In the Śaiva philosophy Śiva is described as the composite of triple *śakti*, namely, knowledge, desire and action.

³ या च का च बलकृतिरिन्द्रकर्मैव तत्—*Nirukta*, VII. 10.

⁴ स वरुणः सायमग्निर्भवति स मित्रो भवति प्रातरुद्यन् । स सविता भूत्वान्तरिक्षेण याति स इन्द्रो भूत्वा तपति मध्यतो दिवम् ॥—*Atharva Veda*, XIII. 3. 13.

⁵ The *Tripurātāpinyupaniṣad* has explained the *gāyatrī* from the standpoint of *śakti-vāda*.

mighty god whose wonderful powers are narrated in highly eulogistic language¹. If godhead brings with it any idea of superiority or greatness, it is certainly due to our fond supposition that gods are infinitely superior to us in power, and that they are masters of our destiny. It is *śakti* that has made the gods what they are. Their claim, to speak the truth, to our reverence rests upon this ground. Naturally we are inclined to show respect to one who is in possession of a greater amount of *śakti* than we are. In this natural inclination or spontaneous attitude of the mind one will find the true beginning of *śakti*-worship as portrayed in the Vedic hymns. Quite in keeping with the noble utterance of the Lord² we may be allowed to say that, all that is great and sublime, mighty and magnificent, charming and wonderful, is only the manifestation of *śakti*. The greatness of divine power has been the main theme of a hymn of the R̥gveda³.

The foundation of *śaktivāda* was thus laid in the Vedic hymns. The main structure only remained to be constructed by the Purāṇas and the *Tantras*. We tried to see how *śakti* was first recognised by the Vedic *seers*. It was early felt that some amount of potentiality—some invisible force setting everything to motion—lies behind the veil of nature.

The wonderful power of the gods was often styled *māyā* in the R̥gveda. Hymns that are addressed to Indra contain abundant references to *māyā*. Indra is said to have assumed various forms through the influence of

¹ विष्णोर्नुकं वीर्याणि प्रवोचं यः पार्थिवानि विममे रजांसि । R̥gveda, I. 154. 1.

² यद् यद् विभूतिमत् सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥—*Gītā*, X. 41.

³ R̥gveda III. 55.

*māyā*¹, and he is sometimes called *māyāvin*². The possession of *māyā* or supernatural powers accounts for the superhuman activities on the part of the gods. This is not the proper place to enter into a lengthy discussion as to the exact nature of *māyā* and the relation in which it stands to the Supreme Being. It will suffice here to say that *māyā* is the greatest of all *śaktis* that are said to repose in the Infinite³.

Māyā, as we shall see later on, is a power of Brahman which is inexplicable. In spite of its apparently uncompromising character *māyā* is said to belong to the Great God. But *māyā*, we should remember, is subservient to Him. The scriptures enjoin that 'He is the Lord who has *māyā* under His control' (स ईशो यद्वशे माया). But in the higher plane of spiritual experience all contradictions and inconsistencies cease to exist. In the Upaniṣads *māyā* has been identified with *prakṛti*—the primordial matter, and one that owns it has been styled *maheśvara* (the Great Lord)⁴. *Māyā* is generally held to be the supreme cosmic principle : to the Vaiṣṇavas it is *vaiṣṇavī śakti*⁵ ; to the

¹ इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते—Rgveda. VI. 47. 18.

² This epithet is even applied to the almighty God. In order to maintain that Brahman is the conscious cause of the world, Śaṅkara has denominated Brahman as *mahāmāyā*, that is, one that possesses great *māyā* (Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 37.). Elsewhere he states frankly that the Supreme Lord is capable of assuming *māyāmāya-rūpa* for the benefit of his favourite devotees :—
'स्यात् परमेश्वरस्यापीच्छावशान्मायामयं रूपं साधकानुग्रहार्थम्'—under Ved. sūtra, 1. 1. 20. The idea that God plays the part of a great *māyāvin* (magician) seems to have been very popular with the Hindu philosophers. Cf. 'मायावत् समयादयः'—Kusumāñjali, 2. 2.

³ Śaṅkara's conception of Brahman is the conception of One that possesses infinite power (सर्वशक्तियुक्ता परदेवतेत्यवगन्तव्यम्).

⁴ मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम् ।—Svetāśva. 4, 10.

⁵ त्वं वैष्णवी शक्तिरनन्तवीर्या—Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa.

अहं नारायणी नाम सा सत्ता वैष्णवी परा ।—Lakṣmī Tantra .

विष्णोः सामर्थ्यरूपत्वाद्विष्णुशक्तिः प्रगीयते ।—Ahirbudhnyā Saṃhitā, 3. 11.

Śāktas it is *mahāmāyā* or supreme power ; to the Śaivas it is *śakti* inseparable from the Lord ; to the Naiyāyikas it is *sahakāri-śakti*¹ or the power that helps God in His infinite varieties of actions. In the *śākta-tantras* माया has been accorded a unique position. It need not be said that *māyā* has exactly the same connotation as *śakti*. Brahman in its *nirguṇa* aspect is said to be devoid of all qualities, that is to say, it is capable of doing nothing unless and until it comes in contact with *māyā*. We find it expressly stated in the Upaniṣads that the Supreme Lord assumes manifold forms by means of his association with *śakti* or *māyā*. No doubt the Supreme God is all-powerful ; but we must say that it is *śakti* that confers upon Him all kinds of qualities and makes Him determinate (*vyakta*) from a stage that defies all imagination (*avyakta*).

We have already said that the Vedic seers were conscious of the existence of *śakti*, particularly in their outlook on gods. The so-called *devī-sūkta* (Rgveda, VIII. 7. 11.) is explained by the upholder of the *śaktivāda* in such a way as to force upon our attention the miraculous revelation of *śakti*. This *sūkta* is calculated to give us a lofty ideal of *śakti*. It is emphatically stated that all different types of deities have their origin in *śakti*, and that they are all guided and regulated in their respective works by a stupendous form of potentiality. This is not, however, confined to the sphere of divinities alone. *Śakti* reveals herself everywhere, in things finite and infinite, material and spiritual. A small electron as well as the solar system in its infinite dimension is but a manifestation of *śakti*. This is a universal principle—unerring and inviolable.

¹ इत्येषा सहकारिण्यक्तिरसमा माया दुरुन्नीतितः —*Kusumāñjali* 1. 21.

Turning to the Upaniṣads we find a detailed interpretation of the doctrine of *śakti*. The *Śvetāśvatara*, among others, has given in clear terms the fundamentals of the doctrine. What comes first to be decided is the question relating to the ultimate cause out of which the world might have evolved. As is usual in connection with such a discourse, as many as four doctrines, namely, the doctrines of Time, Nature, Fate and Accident,¹ were put forward by way of tentative solutions of the problem, but none of them proved sufficient to the inquisitive mind. The *ṛṣi*s had no other alternative than to depend upon pious meditation as the best instrument of getting into the ultimate truth. The truth actually flashed upon them and they visualised *śakti* lying hidden at the core of all causes². *Śakti* is, so to speak, the final cause of all causes. *Śakti* is divine and is equated with the supreme reality. It is further stated that the supreme power of knowledge and action is natural with Brahman³. The same Upaniṣad has gone further to formulate a very important point which we find so carefully developed in the *śākta-tantras*, namely, one and the same God assumes various forms by virtue of His association with *śakti*⁴. The Brahmasūtra (2. 1. 30.) also speaks of Brahman as one who is associated with all kinds of *śakti*. Śaṅkara observes that the evolution of a world so wonderful would have been a sheer impossibility but for the existence of an equally wonderful power in the Supreme Godhead⁵. He has also quoted *śrutis* in support of his proposition.

1 कालः स्वभावो नियतिर्यदृच्छा—*Śvetāśvatara*, I, 2,

2 ते ध्यानयोगानुगता अपश्यन् देवात्मशक्तिं स्वगुणैर्निगूढाम्—*op. cit.*,

3 परास्य शक्तिर्वहुधा च गीयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च—*op. cit.*,

4 य एको वर्णो बहुधा शक्तियोगाद्वर्णाननेकान्निहितार्थो दधाति—*op. cit.*

5 एकस्यापि ब्रह्मणो विचित्रशक्तियोगादुपपद्यते विचित्रो विकारप्रपञ्च इत्युक्तम् ।—*S.B.*

The famous *śruti* (*tadaikṣata*¹) on which is based the Vedānta-sūtra, 1. 1. 5, gives us a hint as to the volition or *icchā-śakti* on the part of Brahman. The creation of the world was preceded by actual deliberation. Brahman's, we mean *saguṇa* Brahman's, desire (*saṅkalpa*) was powerful enough to bring forth the world of names and forms. The great *Designer* proceeded to create light, water etc., aided by nothing but his infallible desire. This expression of desire, which is somewhat analogous to *kāmakalā* as depicted in the *Tantras*, represents the first evolution of *śakti* from Brahman. To the Śāktas *śakti* is not only the creative principle of the universe, but one that takes back everything unto itself (कवलोकृतनिःशेषतत्त्वग्रामस्वरूपिणी) at the stage of utter annihilation. Creation and dissolution, we must remember, show respectively the evolution and involution of *śakti*.

There are other Upaniṣads and ancient treatises where the doctrine of *śakti* found a more concrete and suggestive expression. Though its antiquity and authenticity might be doubted by scholars, the Tripurātāpinyupaniṣad furnishes us with a detailed account of Tripurāsundarī or Śrīvidyā². It has all the semblance of a work on the *Tantra*. Mention is here made of *śrī-cakra*, *kāmakalā*, *mudrā* and *kaula*. Moreover, a couple of *rks* has been explained entirely from the standpoint of *śaktivāda*. This serves to give the *śakti*-cult a Vedic character. By offering an exposition of the *gāyatrī* in the light of *śaktivāda*, this Upaniṣad has clearly shown how *śakti-tattva* and *Brahma-vidyā* might be interwoven with each other. Tripurā, the primordial embodiment of *śakti*³, is said to be the great

¹ Chāndogya, VI. 2. 3.

² The attention of the reader is drawn to the following texts on Śrīvidyā : —Tripurārahasya, Prapañcasāra, Saundaryalaharī, Śrītattvacintāmaṇi, etc.

³ In his commentary on the 'Lalitā-sahasranāma-stotra' the celebrated Tāntric scholar, Bhāskara-rāya, has taken great pains to prove that Śrīvidyā

divinity that has given birth to the world of existence, the god *savitṛ* being identified with *śakti* (Tripurā¹). The Devyupaniṣad or Atharva-śīrṣopaniṣad, as the very name implies, belongs to the Atharva Veda. It resembles the Tripurātāpinī in having to do with contents that relate directly to the personifications of *śakti* such as Durgā and the like. This Upaniṣad has mentioned such embodiments of *śakti* as Durgā, Mahālakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Vaiṣṇavī. *Śakti* is depicted here as *Brahma-svarūpiṇī* and not as mere activity of matter. On an enquiry made by the gods as to her identity, the Supreme Goddess said : *ahamakhilam jagat* (I am the whole world). This answer put into the mouth of *Devī* is fraught with great significance, because there is nothing that lies beyond the jurisdiction of *śakti*. A few Vedic verses² have been incorporated in this Upaniṣad apparently to bring out the antiquity of the *śakti*-cult. We feel tempted to reproduce *in extenso* the verse in which a beautiful description of the *magna mater* has been given :

तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं
 वैरोचनीं कर्मफलेषु जुष्टाम् ।
 दुर्गां देवीं शरणं प्रपद्या—
 महेऽसुरान्नाशयिष्यै ते नमः ॥

Obeisance to the Goddess is also made in equally beautiful language :

तां दुर्गां दुर्गमां देवीं दुराचारविघातिनीम् ।
 नमामि भवभीतोऽहं संसारार्णवतारिणीम् ॥

(Lalitā) is an ancient deity to which reference is found even in the Vedic literature.

¹ सवितुर्वरेण्यमिति षूङ् प्राणिप्रसवे सविता प्राणिनः सूते प्रसूते शक्तिम् । सूते त्रिपुरा शक्तिराद्येयं त्रिपुरा परमेश्वरी ।—Tripurātāpinī.

² Rgveda, VIII. 7. 11. and IX. 100. 11.

To be firmly convinced of the divine aspect of *śakti* it is necessary to remove certain confusions and misconceptions. While we describe *śakti* as *Brahma-śakti* or *Brahmavidyā*, one should not misunderstand that we are making any distinction between the two (*śakti* and Brahman), as we often do in ordinary cases. Moreover, this way of associating *śakti* with a substratum will not be conflicting with the monistic ideal of the Upaniṣad. The theory of 'non-difference between *śakti* and *śaktimat*' will lend strong support to this view. *Śakti*, as we have seen above, is Brahman itself and not a separate entity only pertaining to Brahman. The Upaniṣads as well as the *śākta-tantras* have made *śakti* and Brahman inseparable from each other¹. *Śakti* is called *śivasamavāyinī* (naturally associated with Śiva) by the Śaivas. This *inseparableness* is the key-note of *śaktivāda*².

All kinds of *vidyā* fall under the category of *śakti*³. *Vidyā* classified into *parā* and *aparā* comprises the entire range of knowledge⁴. *Śakti* has been designated *vidyā* or, more properly, *parā vidyā*, in our ancient literature. It is the all-illuminating divine knowledge which helps one in grasping the ultimate truth by opening the inward vision. *Śakti* is virtually the same as *Brahmavidyā* and constitutes the main theme of the holy scriptures (वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यः). The same idea has been elucidated by the greatest Vedāntin. By the statement 'श्रुतीनां मूर्धाणो दधति

¹ उमाशङ्करयोर्भेदो नास्त्येव परमार्थतः ।

द्विधासौ रूपमास्थाय स्थित एको न संशयः ॥ *Līṅgapurāṇa*.

² तच्छक्तितत्त्वमभिहितमविभागापन्नमस्यैव ।—*Tattvapraśāsa*, 2. 7. Cf. commentary thereon :

सेयं परा शक्तिः परमेश्वरादभिन्ना ।

³ विद्या समस्तास्तव देवि भेदाः स्त्रियः समस्ताः सकला जगत्सु ।—*Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*.

⁴ *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 1. 4.

तव यौ शेखरतया' Śaṅkara purported to place Śrīvidyā over the head of all the Vedas. In the Lalitāsahasranāma we come across such epithets of Śrīvidyā as *vedavedyā* (knowable by the Vedas) and *veda-janani* (mother of the Vedas). The *Tantras* have turned *vidyā* into a living personality. *Vidyā* does not figure there only as an impersonal abstraction but comes to our notice more prominently as a positive embodiment of *śakti*. That the ten manifestations of *śakti* go by the name of *vidyā* is a well-known fact. The Liṅgapurāṇa¹ defines *vidyā* as the highest form of consciousness (*saṃvit*). To comprehend everything as the manifestation of Soul is held to be the saving knowledge that dawns upon a being after a long course of *sādhana*. *Vidyā* and *avidyā* are said to be two forms of the Goddess, the former being the cause of liberation and the latter that of bondage².

The assumption of *śakti* or a female divinity as the supreme personality is likely to give rise to some confusion and misbelief³. To conceive Brahman in a feminine form may be to some a curious sort of unjustifiable conviction. But this is absolutely childish. Because the question of gender or sex cannot arise at all, so far as the Supreme Reality is concerned. The Great God is said to have divided Himself into the twofold aspect of husband and wife⁴. He is both male and female⁵. The word Brahman is used in neuter to impress upon us the *nirguṇa* aspect of the *Absolute*.

¹ आत्माकारेण संवित्त्विर्बुधैर्विद्येति कथ्यते ।—

² विद्याविद्येति देव्या द्वे रूपे जानीहि पार्थिव ।

एकया मुच्यते जन्तुरन्यया बध्यते पुनः ॥—*Devibhāgavata*.

³ Sir John Woodroffe: Preface to the 'Kāmakaḷāvilāsa.'

⁴ स इममेवात्मानं द्वेधा पातयत्ततः पतिश्च पत्नी चाभवताम्—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*,

1. 4. 3. द्विधा कृत्वात्मनो देहमर्द्धेन पुरुषोऽभवत् ।

अर्द्धेन नारी तस्यां स विराजमसृजत् प्रभुः ॥—*Manu*, 1. 32.

⁵ त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी—*Śvetāśvatara*, 4, 3,

ŚAKTI IN THE YOGA SYSTEM

It is quite evident that the *Yoga* system acknowledges the supreme importance of *śakti* in more than one way. First, let us turn our attention to the signification of the word *yoga* itself. To define *yoga* as 'skilfulness in work' (*karmasu kauśalam*¹) is to admit that *yoga* implies only a kind of *śakti*. This implication is made clear by ordinary experience. Again, to explain *yoga* in terms of union or unification also carries with it an idea of *śakti*. The aim of *yoga*, according to the *Tantras*, is to identify the individual soul with the universal one. One cannot, it is true, get oneself united with another, if one be wanting in the requisite amount of *śakti*. We can hardly conceive of the immensity of *śakti* that is required for the sacred union of the individual with the Supreme Being. Lastly, considering the definition suggested by Patañjali, we find that *yoga* is *de facto* a device which confers upon one the power of restraining the various functions of the mind. Thus, whatever definition might be accepted, the connotation of the term *yoga* always seems to involve *śakti*.

The *Yoga* system has indirectly referred to the supreme *śakti* or all-knowing power of *Īśvara*. The very word *Īśvara* implies the existence of *śakti* in God. His

The *Sūtasamhitā* as well as the *Purāṇas* speak of *śakti* as what represents the half of Śiva's divine person (वन्दे तामनिशं भक्त्या श्रीकण्ठार्धशरीरिणीम्). The Supreme Being is in essence the same as *śakti*, His body, naturally free from all impurities and mundane elements, being called *sākta* (i.e. composed of *śakti*) by the Śaiva teachers.

¹ योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्—*Gītā*, 2. 50.

glories and power of knowledge are said to be eternal (सदैवैश्वरः). *Puruṣa* is characterised as an omniscient Being¹. This attribute, we should remember, does not apply to anything else. To speak of God as an all-knowing Being is to assume that he possesses *śakti* or infinite wisdom. Nobody equals Him in knowledge and power. The first and foremost characteristic of *Īśvara* is that all knowledge and glories have their culmination in Him². Vācaspati has interpreted the aphorism *tatra niratīśayam sarvajñabījaṁ* as what purports to show that *jñāna-śakti* (power of knowledge) is an essential feature of God³. He is called *sarvajña*, since he possesses that superhuman type of knowledge which is considered to be the criterion of omniscience. He is not only omniscient but is also full of all kinds of activities. He creates the world not for himself, but for the enjoyment of all creatures.

Mention is also made of *citi-śakti* which is held to be identical with *puruṣa*. It is maintained that *citi-śakti* represents the real nature of *puruṣa*⁴. When all mental functions are dissolved, *puruṣa* is said to assume his *svarūpa*, i.e., he becomes the same as Pure Consciousness. Vācaspati calls it subtle and eternal, for it never deviates from its own nature⁵. This interpretation of *citi-śakti*

¹ One is called *sarvajña* if he happens to possess all knowledge in its perfection. The Śaiva system has also applied the same attribute (omniscience) to Śiva :—

‘सर्वज्ञः सर्वविच्छिन्नः’—*Mrgendra Tantra*.

² यत्र काष्ठाप्राप्तिर्ज्ञानस्य स सर्वज्ञः, स च पुरुषविशेष इति—*Vyāsa-Bhāṣya*.

³ क्रियाज्ञानशक्तौ शास्त्रं प्रमाणसमिधाय ज्ञानशक्तावनुमानं प्रमाणं दर्शयति ।

It is to be noticed here that Vācaspati has also referred to *kriyā-śakti* pertaining to God. Śiva, as we have already pointed out, is held to be a combination of threefold *śakti*, viz. knowledge, volition and action.

⁴ स्वरूपप्रतिष्ठा तदानीं चितिशक्तिर्यथा कैवल्ये—*Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* under *Yoga-sūtra*. 1.3.

⁵ न कूटस्थनित्या चितिशक्तिः स्वरूपाच्चयवते ।

comes nearer to that of the *Śāktas*. Reference is also made to *śakti* in the last aphorism (*puruṣārthasūnyānām guṇānām pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṁ svarūpapratisthā vā citi-śaktiriti*) in order to show that *kaivalya* or final liberation of the soul means only the pure revelation of *citi-śakti* which is devoid of all associations.

It is again said that *śakti* is one of the six attributes of the mind¹. The human mind, like all natural objects, is also liable to various changes (*pariṇāma*). *Śakti* as a mental faculty is not, however, visible to our naked eyes; it is understood by inference arising from the comprehension of gross matters. Vācaspati has spoken of *śakti* not only as a property of the mind alone, but has also described it as the subtlest stage of all things that are produced².

Śakti has been called inert and conscious according to the nature of the substrata in which it inheres. Things, either inert or intelligent, are all found to display some amount of *śakti* or activity. A pitcher, for example, exhibits a kind of activity when it is made to serve the purpose of fetching water. But this *śakti* is said to be different from one that is displayed by intelligent beings. A distinction has, therefore, been made between *jada-śakti* and *cetana-śakti* on the basis of the quality of things.

The aphorism *svasvāmīśaktyoḥ*³ etc., has directly made mention of two kinds of *śakti*, namely, *śakti* as pertaining to the object under observation (*dṛśya*), and *śakti* as belonging to the beholder (*dṛaṣṭṛ*). The former

¹ निरोधधर्मसंस्काराः परिणामोऽथ जीवनम् । चेष्टाशक्तिश्च चित्तस्य धर्मा दर्शन-
वर्जिताः ॥—quoted by Vyāsa under Yoga-sūtra, 3. 15.

² शक्तिरप्युद्गतानां कार्याणां सूक्ष्मावस्था चेतसो धर्मः, स्थूलकार्यानुभवादेवानुमीयते ।

³ Yoga-sūtra, 2. 23,

is called inert since it is associated with *prakṛti*¹, and the latter is termed conscious inasmuch as it belongs to *puruṣa* which has consciousness as its very nature. The union between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* is also said to be consequent upon the operation of *śakti*². Again, *asmitā* has been defined as an unreal way of identifying *drk-śakti* (*puruṣa*) with *darśana-śakti* (*buddhi*). From this false identity arises our pain. Vyāsa designates this power as *bhoktr-śakti* and *bhogyā-śakti* respectively.

Next we turn to the *yoga-śakti* or the power derivable from the practice of *yoga*. The *Yoga* system, as we all know, has laid considerable stress on the various forms of *śakti* to which *yogins* are entitled by their mystic process of *sādhana*. The third section of the *Yoga-sūtras*³ has dealt with the supernatural powers that are attainable by the practice of various processes of *yoga*. The *yogins* are generally believed to have a vision of the super-sensuous world where everything has a touch of divine beauty⁴. The practice of *yoga* is said to confer upon a *yogin* such miraculous *śakti* as to enable him to bring the whole world under his control.

Man hardly knows the immensity of the extent to which his mind may develop under a systematic practice of the mental concentration and self-restraint. It is laid down with all emphasis that one who knows the actual relation between the space and the body through the concentration of the mind is blessed with the power of

1 तथापि तस्य जडत्वेन तद्रूपं शक्तिकार्यं दर्शनमपि जडमिति—Vācaspati.

2 स चानयोः संयोगः शक्तिमात्रेण व्यवस्थितः—Vyāsa-Bhāṣya.

3 *Vibhūti-pāda*.

4 This is popularly known as *yogaja-pratyakṣa* which is described as a form of super-sensuous perception.

moving freely in the sky'. Similarly, one can acquire the power of entering into the body of another person by removing the barriers which have encompassed the mind within the corporal mechanism¹. There are many other similar *siddhis* described in the *Yoga-sūtras*. Undeniable is the power that results from the practice of *yoga*. The *yoga-śakti* is as much a reality as the positive power evinced by potential herbs and sacred incantations. The author of the *Sāṃkhya-sūtras* seems to have unshakable faith in the miraculous powers derivable from *yoga* (योगसिद्धयोऽप्यौषधादिसिद्धिर्वन्नापलपनीयाः—*Sāṃ. sūtra*. 5. 129).

It should be remembered that all these powers have their origin in the mind. They come from within and not from without. Mind is the reservoir of infinite *śakti*; it requires only a course of spiritual discipline to get one's mind so fully developed as to work miracles. The practice of *yoga* generally aims at the enhancement of the mental power through the help of deep concentration. The mysticism of *yoga* has so much fascination for the Indian ascetics that it has been seriously cultivated in India from time immemorial. The practice of *yoga* seems to have been an outstanding feature of the spiritual culture of India. It is believed to have the power of making a *yogin* recipient of the *ārṣa jñāna* (sacred knowledge) and heavenly bliss.

We cannot close the discourse on *yoga-śakti* without a reference to *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* which is of so great importance to the Indian *yogins*. Though the term *kuṇḍalinī* does not particularly occur in the so-called *Yoga-sūtras*, there

¹ *Yoga-sūtra*, 3, 42.

² *Op. cit.* 3. 38.

is no denying the fact that we often come across an elaborate description of it in the *Tantras* and treatises dealing with mysticism. *Kuṇḍalinī*, sometimes called *kulakuṇḍalinī*, is the power of consciousness (*cit-śakti*) that is supposed to be lying in the *mūlādhāra* in the shape of a sleeping serpent. The *Tantrarāja*¹ has identified it with *jīva-śakti*, i. e., the vital power sustaining the body. It is said to be luminous like lightning and considered to be the final source of all intelligence. From it rises the life-breath of all animals. Śaṅkara, the great *yogin*, has referred to this *śakti* in his *Ānandalaharī*². The *yogins* are said to cultivate the mystic process of awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* so as to make it pass through the spinal chord (*susumnā*) till it reaches the Supreme Being seated on the thousand-petaled lotus (*sahasrāra*).

¹ मूलाधारस्थवह्नात्मतेजोमध्ये व्यवस्थिता ।

जीवशक्तिः कुण्डलाख्या प्राणाकारेण तेन सा ॥

प्रसन्नभुजगाकारा त्रिरावर्त्ता महाद्युतिः ।—*Tantrarāja*, 30. 64.

² अवाप्य स्वां भूमिं भुजगनिभमध्युष्टवलयं

स्वमात्मानं कृत्वा स्वपिपि कुलकुण्डे कुहरिणी ।—

ŚAKTI IN THE SĀMKHYA SYSTEM

Now we proceed to consider the Sāmkhya view of *śakti*. It must be stated at the very outset that *śakti* as a divinity or as a spiritual power does not find expression in the Sāmkhya system, where, so to speak, we have only a commonplace view of *śakti*, i.e., *śakti* as an active force or ability (residing in matters) that manifests itself by the production of effects. What is meant by *śaktasya śakyakaraṇāt*¹ is that an efficient cause (i.e., a cause possessing *śakti*) produces only that effect which it is competent to do by its very nature. A lump of clay, for instance, has got the power to make a jar and not a piece of cloth. These arguments go to prove that a cause contains in itself the power of producing an effect consistently with its nature or *śakti*. *Śakti*, as Vācaspati holds, is comprehended only by the observation of effects². *Śakti* is neither visible nor tangible ; it is grasped through a mode of inference only.

The Sāmkhya doctrine of causation is further explained by the expression *śaktitah pravṛtte*³ which means that an effect evolves from a cause as the result of its activity⁴. This is a fact of universal acceptance. According to the *satkāryavādins*, the production or manifestation of the effect suggests the pre-existence of

¹ *Sāmkhya-kārikā*, 9.

² शक्तिश्च कार्यदर्शनादवगम्यते—*Tattvakaumudī* under Sām. Kārikā, 9. The same view was expressed by Vācaspati under Yoga-sūtra, 2. 23. It is further stated that *śakti* as efficiency of matter resides in the substratum of an efficient cause :—‘सा शक्तिः शक्तकारणाश्रया’ ।

³ *Sāmkhya-kārikā*, 15.

⁴ कारणशक्तिः कार्यं प्रवर्तते इति सिद्धम्—*Tattvakaumudī*.

the effect in the cause, of course, in an indiscernible state (*avyakta*). The rudiments of effects are believed to be existent in the causes prior to their manifestation as such.

The authors of the Sāṃkhya-sūtras and *Vṛtti* have in many places alluded to various kinds of *śakti*.¹ *Avidyā* or nescience is described in terms of *śakti* (नाविद्याशक्त्योगो निःसङ्गस्य) and it is laid down as one of the cardinal tenets that *puruṣa* which is free from all associations cannot virtually have any connection with the *avidyā-śakti* (power of nescience). Again, difference of *śakti* has been recognised in order to defend the multiplicity of sense-organs². It is maintained that sense-organs in their respective functions exhibit different kinds of *śakti*. Effects cannot be variant and different unless there is difference of *śakti* in the causes that operate. Reference is also made to physical power³, and it is postulated that *śakti* that lies in a subtle form in all beings may, by the force of combination, give rise to such a great power as is necessary to carry a large piece of stone. Small indeed is the power of a thing when taken by itself, but it can by combination with similar things perform a work that requires a good deal of strength. A cotton-fibre, for instance, though of little capacity by itself, becomes powerful enough to bind a big elephant when it is made into a rope in conjunction with others of its kind.⁴

1 Sāṃkhya-sūtras, 5. 31-33 (*ādheya-śakti*), 43 (*nija-śakti*).

2 Op. cit. 2. 24. शक्तिभेदस्तु अवश्यं वक्तव्यः—*Vṛtti*.

3 Op. cit. 3. 22. यथा मद्शक्तिः प्रतिपुरुषे सूक्ष्मत्वेन दृष्टा, सांहत्ये महच्छक्तुर्नवाद् बृहच्छिलामपि वहन्ति—*Vṛtti*.

4 Op. cit. 5. 130. यस्य स्वल्पा शक्तिरस्ति तस्य समुदायान्महच्छक्तिर्जायते यथा तन्तूनां स्वल्पशक्तिमतां समुदायाद् गजबन्धशक्तिरुच्यते—*Vṛtti*.

To sum up : everything is endowed with its inherent *śakti* which becomes evident whenever something evolves out of it by way of causal sequence. All efforts and energies are due to the operation of *śakti*. The principle of causation which is followed by the evolution of the universe bespeaks the manifestation of dormant *śakti*. *Prakṛti*, as conceived by the Sāṃkhya, is an inexhaustible stock of manifold *śakti*. It is said that *prakṛti* keeps *mahat* and other *tattvas* always powerful and active in their respective fields by a perennial supply of *śakti*.¹ In whatever direction we cast our glance, we find a majestic display of *śakti*. There is, according to the Sāṃkhya view, no difference between *śakti* and the substance that possesses it². Reference to the power of *pradhāna* is made more than once³.

A few words more about *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti*, as understood in the Sāṃkhya system, is the unconscious (*acetana*) primordial element which accounts for the whole creation⁴. It has sometimes been identified with *māyā*⁵—a term frequently used by the Vedāntins in the sense of illusion or negation of reality. Their likeness or identity rests upon the fact that both of them serve to hide the truth from our vision, that is to say, prevent us from realising our own selves. It should be particularly remembered that the *Śākta* literature has assigned to *prakṛti* a different significance altogether. There is a wide gulf of difference between

¹ शक्तिश्चेति—Sāṃ. Sūtra. 1. 132.

² शक्तिशक्तिमतोरभेदः ।

³ प्रधानशक्तियोगाच्चेतु सङ्गापत्तिः—Op. cit. 5, 8.

⁴ Vedāntins have, however, set aside the causality of *prakṛti* on the ground of its unconsciousness. 'नाचेतनं जगत्कारणमनुमातव्यं भवति'—Śaṃkara under Ved. Sūtra 2, 2, 2.

⁵ मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम् ।—Śvetāśvatara.

the Sāṃkhya and the śākta interpretations of *prakṛti*. The one, though eternal, is 'unconscious and exists for no other nobler purpose than the enjoyment of *puruṣa*, while the other is held to be consciousness itself (*cit-svarūpā*)¹ and regarded as the supreme active principle (*mahāśakti*). To the Śāktas what is called *mūla-prakṛti* (primordial substance) is the same as *ādyā śakti* (Original Power). By *pradhāna* Śaṅkara in his *Prapañcasūtra* has not only understood that primordial stock of energy wherefrom the trinity of gods was born² but has in clear terms shown the identity between *pradhāna* and *mahāśakti* (Supreme Power).³ The same idea of *prakṛti* is to be found also in the Pañcarātrāgama.⁴ The śākta-*tantras* seem to have borrowed the term *prakṛti* from the Sāṃkhya but employed it to denote their highest divinity.

1 सर्वचैतन्यरूपां तामाद्यां विद्यां च धीमहि ।—*Devībhāgavata*.

2 अथाभवन् ब्रह्महरीश्वराख्याः पुरा प्रधानात् प्रलयावसाने ।—*Prapañcasūtra*, 1. 2.

3 प्रधानमिति यामादुर्या शक्तिरिति कथ्यते ।—*Op. cit.*

4 पञ्चरात्रागमे शिववाक्यम् :—

यस्या न प्रकृतिः सेयं मूलप्रकृतिसंज्ञिता ।

तस्य महं समुत्पन्नस्तत्त्वैस्तेर्महदादिभिः ॥

ŚAKTI IN MĪMĀMSĀ AND NYĀYA

The Mīmāṃsakas have acknowledged *śakti*, though not strictly in a spiritual sense. They have taken *śakti* to be a separate entity. *Śakti* is said to be manifold in its nature and is different in different things. It has both eternal and non-eternal aspects. To the Mīmāṃsakas the cause of a phenomenon is something that possesses *śakti*¹. A lump of clay, for instance, is said to have the power of producing a pitcher and so on. A cause in the course of producing its effects shows unmistakably that it is in possession of some sort of *śakti* peculiar to itself. A thing is called *kāraka* or *kāraṇa* (cause) because of its possession of *śakti* or activity. Here we find the real basis on which stands the doctrine of causation.

Śakti, though not comprehensible by ordinary sense-organs, comes to our cognition through the process of *arthāpatti*². The Mīmāṃsaka standpoint is as follows³ : the assumption that fire has the power of burning follows from the fact that we cannot explain the positive function of fire without reference to its particular activity⁴. Similarly, Inference and Analogy also serve to strengthen the assumption of *śakti* on the basis of *arthāpatti*.

A strong opposition to the aforesaid view was raised by the Naiyāyikas who could not persuade themselves

¹ Particularly Prabhākara and his followers hold this view.

² *Arthāpatti* is a kind of proof or source of knowledge accepted by the Mīmāṃsakas. It is a sort of implication or assumption deduced from the given circumstances.

³ मीमांसकैर्वेदादिकं प्रति तत्तत्कारणेषु घटाद्यनुकूलां शक्तिं कल्पयित्वा तादृश-
विलक्षणशक्तिमत्त्वेनैव कारणत्वस्याङ्गीकारात्—*Taraṅgiṇī*.

⁴ तत्र प्रत्यक्षपूर्विका तावदर्थापत्तिः प्रत्यक्षावगतदहनसंसर्गोद्भूतदाहाख्यकार्यान्यथा-
नुपपत्त्या बह्वेदांशशक्तिकल्पना—*Nyāyamañjarī*.

to believe in the existence of *śakti* as a separate entity. There was consequently no room for *śakti* in their enumeration of categories of thought¹. To sum up their arguments : *śakti* is nothing but the very nature of a thing ; it is just like an inseparable property of a thing. The power of burning (*dāhikā śakti*) is not virtually a different thing from fire itself. We can never think of fire irrespective of this power which is its very nature. Fire without the power of burning is against all human comprehension. Fire and the power of burning are one and the same thing².

Śakti being imperceptible by sense-organs (*atīndriya*) was not recognised by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa. It was on this ground that he rejected *arthāpatti* as a kind of *pramāṇa* (evidence) that would go to prove the existence of *śakti*³.

The Mīmāṃsakas seem to be in full agreement with the grammarian when they emphatically lay down that there could be no idea of *kāraka* (grammatical case) unless *śakti* is recognised⁴. In their philosophy *vyāpāra* (action) has the same implication as *śakti*, and consequently we find

¹ *Śakti*, to be clear, is not a substance, because it is not tangible, शक्तेर्द्रव्ये नान्तर्भावः स्पर्शशून्यत्वात्—*Taraṅginī*.

² Manifestation as well as disappearance of activity goes to prove the existence of *śakti*. Fire, as we all know, has the natural power of burning which remains intact as long as it does not come in contact with things that would arrest its natural activity. It is said that fire loses its power or *śakti* whenever some kind of herbs or metals are placed before it.

³ याश्च प्रत्यक्षादिपूर्विकाः शक्तिकल्पनायामर्थापत्तय उदाहृताः ताश्च शक्तेरतीन्द्रियाया अभावात् निर्विषया एव ।

स्वरूपादुद्भवत् कार्यं सहकार्युपवृंहितात् ।

न हि कल्पयितुं शक्तं शक्तिमन्यामतीन्द्रियाम् ॥

Nyāyamañjarī.

⁴ ननु शक्तिमन्तरेण कारकमेव न भवेत्—*op. cit.*

no reason why both of them should be maintained for nothing but superfluity¹. *Vyāpāra* as well as *śakti* is comprehended through the products that result from their operation². Jayanta Bhaṭṭa concludes with the observation that if there be anything like imperceptible *śakti*, it must come within the scope of inference and not within any other mode of *pramāṇa*³.

The Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāyikas are at variance in their outlook of *śakti*. The former has understood *śakti* as the inherent power of a thing, while the latter has explained the same in terms of *kāraṇatva*,⁴ i.e. the function or property of a cause. Haridāsa in his exposition of the *Kusumāñjali* (*kārikās* 5-7) has referred to their respective views concerning the nature of *śakti*. Here he has not only dealt with the position of the Naiyāyikas but has also thrown considerable light upon the Mīmāṃsaka point of view. He has, first of all, presented before us the standpoint that tends to defend

¹ अपि च व्यापारोऽप्यतीन्द्रियः शक्तिरिन्द्रिये भवद्विरन्यतरकल्पनयैव कार्योत्पत्तेः किमुभयकल्पनागौरवेण—Op. cit.

² The author of the *Mahābhāṣya* has also spoken of *kriyā* in the same strain :—

क्रिया नामेयमत्यन्तापरिहृष्टा ।.....सासाधनुमानगम्या [Pāp. ११३१] ।

³ भवन्त्यपि वा शक्तिरतीन्द्रियानुमानस्यैव विषयः—*Nyāyamañjarī*.

⁴ It would be a positive mistake to suppose that the Naiyāyikas have set aside the very conception of *śakti*. What they have actually done is that instead of *śakti* they have used the term *kāraṇatva* which means the same thing (the power of a cause). Indeed *śakti* is not recognised as a different thing (*padārthāntara*), but it appeals to the Naiyāyikas as the property or function of a cause. *Kāraṇatva*, to be clear, is a quality (*śakti*) by virtue of which a thing becomes the cause of a consequent. *Kāraṇatva* which is thus synonymous with *śakti* is found to be the very nature of a cause. Udayana had no arguments to prove the negation of *śakti*. What he has done is to show the identity between *śakti* and *kāraṇatva* (“अथ शक्तिनिषेधे किं प्रमाणम्, न किञ्चित्, तत् किमस्त्येव ? वाढम्, न हि नो दर्शने शक्तिपदार्थ एव नास्ति । कोऽसौ तर्हि ? कारणत्वम्”—under *Kusumāñjali*, *kār.* 1. 13). *Kāraṇatva* actually means the activity of a cause.

śakti as a separate category of thought. *Śakti*, according to the Mīmāṃsakas, is a separate thing altogether; it seems to be manifold in different individuals, being eternal in things permanent and non-eternal in things temporal.¹ Things that are eternal like time and space have their *śakti* permanently associated with them. In accordance with the view held by another school of Mīmāṃsā, *śakti*, viz., the power of producing fire, as is exhibited by straw, metals, etc., is an eternal entity and no one can deny its existence².

In opposition to the atheistic doctrine that, 'all phenomena are accidental', the Naiyāyikas have advanced counter arguments to show the reverse of it, that is to say, 'nothing happens without a cause.' Now the activity displayed by a cause in the course of producing its effect is called by the Naiyāyikas *kāraṇatva* and not simply *śakti* as comprehended by the Mīmāṃsakas. The main contention of the Naiyāyikas is that the oneness of function or the production of the same effect by various causes, as contemplated by the Mīmāṃsakas, has but little justification from the standpoint of Logic,³ because different causes are not supposed to produce the same effect.

It is found that fire is produced by different causes such as straw, stones, wood etc.; but it cannot be held that fire generated by straw is the same as is produced by a stone having contact with the rays of the sun. What we mean to say is that results are bound to

¹ शक्तिश्च पदार्थान्तरं प्रतिव्यक्ति नाना अनित्ये अनित्या "नित्ये नित्यैव सा शक्ति-
रनित्ये भावहेतुजा" । Haridāsa under K. kār. 1. 5.

² बह्वनुकूला वृत्तारणिमणिनिष्ठा शक्तिर्नित्येति तु मतान्तरम्—loc. cit.

³ प्रवाहो नादिमानेष न विजात्येकशक्तिमान् ।—Kusumāñjali, kār. 1. 6.

vary, if their causes are different. As straw, wood and stone are things that differ from one another by their very nature, they are not supposed to be competent to produce the same kind of fire in their causal aspects. That there lies a good deal of difference among various kinds of fire (as produced by straw, wood and stone) is a matter of ordinary perception.¹ The conclusion to which the foregoing arguments lead is that, 'śakti that gives rise to fire' is not one and the same in all cases.² The Naiyāyikas were, therefore, compelled to acknowledge 'difference in kind' with regard to the effect and to this difference (*vaijālyā*) they attributed *kāraṇatva* or the real function of a cause, without making separate room for śakti in their whole discourse on causation.³ As a matter of fact, we must look upon straw as the functioning cause of 'fire generated by straw' (*tārṇa vahni*).⁴ This is all right. But are we not to recognise śakti when we attempt to ascertain the cause of fire in general? "No", say the Naiyāyikas emphatically. Fire of all denominations, it is held, is caused by light having different varieties of hot touch.⁵ This is how śakti as a separate thing is done away with by the Naiyāyikas.⁶

1 तार्णवह्नादिनिष्ठं वैजात्यं प्रत्यक्षसिद्धम्—Haridāsa under K. kār. 1. 5.

2 यदि च वह्नुःकुला एका शक्तिः कल्प्यते तदा नेतृ समाधानम्—loc. cit.

3 न्यायमतन्तु तृणादिजन्यतावच्छेदकं वैजात्यमेव—loc. cit.

4 A stone is the main cause, so far as the 'fire from a stone' is concerned. An association with the sun's rays serves only as an auxiliary with regard to this particular variety of fire.

5 वह्निसामान्यं प्रति विजातीयोष्णस्पर्शवत्तेज एव कारणम्—Haridāsa under *Kusumāñjali*, kār. 6

6 Gaṅgeśa in his *Upamāna-cintāmaṇi* discussed at length the plausibility of including śakti and śārśya within the scope of *padārtha* and ultimately rejected them. He has shown the untenable features of those arguments on the strength of which Prabhākara and others tried to defend them as additional categories. The author of the *Muktīvalī* has followed in the wake of Gaṅgeśa in excluding these two from his sevenfold category.

Sivāditya, a teacher of the later school of Vaiśeṣika, has defined *śakti* as the nature of *dravya* (thing).¹ He seems to have made no distinction between substance and power. *Śakti*, to speak the truth, is not a quality inhering in a substance, but it implies the very nature of a substance.

Śakti or active force makes its existence felt in various ways. The Mīmāṃsakas have referred to a commonplace instance. It is generally found that fire has the power of producing burning sensation or that of reducing everything to ashes. But under certain circumstances fire is found to lose its natural power. There are two kinds of stone: one the presence of which helps combustion (*uttejaka-maṇi*) and the other that arrests combustion altogether (*pratibandhaka-maṇi*).² Now this appearance and disappearance of burning power, due to the presence and absence of those two kinds of stone, goes to demonstrate the existence of *śakti* but does never prove the negation of it. The power of burning is natural with fire which is only temporarily checked by the proximity of a particular stone.³ Moreover, the very question of manifestation and suppression becomes absolutely meaningless, if there be no such thing as *śakti* in fire.⁴ No one can, therefore, deny that the power of burning as inherent in fire is real and permanent. The

¹ शक्तिर्द्रव्यादिस्वरूपमेव—Saptapadārthī, 56.

² शक्तिनाशं करोतीति मग्नादिः प्रतिबन्धक उच्यते, तथा च शक्तिः स्वीकार्या—Haridāsa under *Kusumāñjali*, kār. 1. 9.

³ तत्र मग्नादिना वह्नौ दाहामुकूला शक्तिर्नाश्यते, उत्तेजकेन मग्नाद्यपसारणेन च जन्यते इति कल्प्यते—*Muktāvālī*.

⁴ लाघवाच्चक्तिर्नित्या वह्नादौ कल्प्यते—Haridāsa under K. kār. 1. 10.

presence of *pratibandhaka-maṇi* does not totally destroy the power but only suppresses it for the time being.¹

To this view great objection was raised by the Naiyāyikas. It is the absence of *pratibandhaka-maṇi*, they hold, that is to be considered here as the direct cause of burning². As fire is found to display its activity only when the aforesaid stone has no close touch with it, so one is justified in attributing the causal function to the absence of the stone instead of maintaining various kinds of *śakti* in different forms of fire.³ This view has the advantage of recognising only one cause, that is to say, absence of the stone, and is not vitiated by the admission of multifarious *śakti*. One may, however, find fault with the Naiyāyikas, because they have made non-existence (*manyabhāva*) the cause of a phenomenon. But this is immaterial. Udayana has stated in clear terms that existence as well as non-existence is equally competent to be the cause of a phenomenon.⁴

The source from which *śaktivāda* has drawn its strongest support is the doctrine of causation. One cannot analyse any causal relation without being impressed by the existence of a certain form of *śakti*. It is needless to say that all effects are only the outcome of

¹ प्रतिबन्धके सति शक्तिकुण्डनम्—loc. cit.

² मण्यभावादेरेव वा हेतुत्वं कल्प्यते, अनेनैव सामञ्जस्ये अनन्त-शक्ति-तत्प्रागभाव-ध्वंस-कल्पनानौचित्यात् ।—*Muktāvalī*.

³ वह्निनिष्ठानाशक्तिरूपनापेक्षया उत्तेजकाभावविशिष्टमण्यभावस्यैकस्यैव वरं हेतुत्वौचित्यात्—*Haridāsa*.

This view, we should remember, involves a great prolixity to which the Mīmāṃsakas are not prepared to subscribe—"मीमांसकास्तु उत्तेजकाभावकूटविशिष्टमण्यभावत्वेन हेतुत्वे गौरवात्"—*Haridāsa*.

⁴ भावो यथा तथा भावः कारणं कार्यवन्मतः ।

प्रतिबन्धो विसामग्री तद्धेतुः प्रतिबन्धकः ॥

Kusumāñjali, *kār.* 1. 10.

śakti which is termed *kāraṇatva* by the Naiyāyikas. The activity displayed by a cause is, as we have already said, nothing but *śakti*. That *kāraṇatva* is the same as the *śakti* of a cause has been pointed out by Udayana.

A cause by no means loses its *śakti*. It will continue to produce its effect either immediately or at an interval. The belief of the orthodox Hindus is that no actions prove fruitless. The Vedic rituals like *aśvamedha* sacrifice, for instance, though performed by a man in this life, are supposed to be efficient enough to confer heavenly bliss upon the same man in the next stage of existence. This would not have been at all possible unless we are prepared to admit that actions give rise to a kind of *śakti* or *apūrva* which is not likely to be destroyed by any lapse of time¹.

Udayana could not help upholding *śakti* in his conception of *Īśvara*. This is clear from the closing verse of the first section of his *Kusumāñjali*². Having established the existence of *Īśvara* as one that presides over *adṛṣṭa* (merits and demerits), Udayana has at last spoken of his *sahakāri-śakti*. It is *adṛṣṭa* (unseen action) that plays the rôle of subsidiary power and is called by different names such as *māyā*³, *prakṛti*, *avidyā*, etc. *Adṛṣṭa* is

¹ चिरध्वस्तं फलायालं न कर्मातिशयं विना ।—K. kūr, 1. 9. *Atiśaya* is the same as *śakti*. Cf. “घटस्य कश्चिदतिशयो मृत्तिकायां न क्षीरे”—Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya under Ved. Sūtra, 2. 1. 18.

² इत्येषा सहकारिशक्तिरसमा माया दुरुक्तीतितो
मूलत्वात् प्रकृतिः प्रबोधभयतोऽविद्येति यस्योदिता ।
देवोऽसौ विरतप्रपञ्चरचनाकल्लोलकोलाहलः
साक्षात् साक्षितया मनस्यभिरति बध्नातु शान्तो मम ॥

³ The Vedāntins, as we have said elsewhere, have also described *māyā* as the mysterious power of Brahman.

called *sahakūrin* in the sense that it helps *Īśvara* in His manifold functions. *Adṛṣṭa* is unconscious by itself and consequently requires the interference of a conscious agent before it can successfully play the part of a cause. We need hardly say that this conscious agent is *Īśvara*.

It is, however, undeniable that the Naiyāyikas could not altogether leave aside *śakti*. God in their conception is one that is not only the efficient cause and supreme agent of the world, but possesses innumerable qualities such as knowledge, activity, desire¹ etc. Immensity of knowledge is said to be the conspicuous feature of the Supreme Soul or *Īśvara*.² We need not point out again that knowledge is capable of being interpreted as a form of *śakti*, and that the Śaivites have attributed this *śakti* (*jñāna-śakti*) along with other two (*icchā* and *kriyā*) to their Highest Divinity (Śiva). Vātsyāyana has alluded to the Āgama which goes to make *Īśvara* an all-knowing Being.³ Moreover, to describe Godhead as the efficient cause (*Īśvaraḥ kāraṇam*) is to assume that He is in possession of such *śakti* as is necessary for the act of creating and sustaining the world. The creation of the world out of atoms required the help of an intelligent Maker or Agent having manifold power at His disposal. Thus we find that *Īśvara*, whether personal or impersonal, is a Being that is full of *śakti*. We are not prepared to believe that one who is the Maker of this world (*karttā*) might be one who is destitute of *śakti*.

¹ गुणविशिष्टमात्मान्तरमीश्वरः—Vātsyāyana-Bhāṣya.

² न तावदस्य बुद्धिं विना कश्चिद् धर्मो लिङ्गभूतः शक्य उपपादयितुम्—Vātsyāyana-Bhāṣya under Nyāya-sūtra, 4. 21.

³ आगमाच्च द्रष्टा बोद्धा सर्वज्ञाता ईश्वर इति—loc. cit.

Udayana was truly æsthetic when he pictured to himself the Supreme God as the most beautiful Being ever conceived.¹ The famous logician could not be satisfied without having a sight of this repository of beauty and kindness. To Raghunātha Śiromaṇi God is a being full of joy and knowledge.² Do not all these attributes go to prove that the conception of Godhead is the conception of immense power? When we call Him all-knowing and all-merciful, the beautiful and the joyful, we turn Him actually into a Being that possesses inexplicable *śakti*. Truly does Rāmānuja describe Puroṣottama as one possessing all kinds of noble and sublime virtues (*kalyāṇaguṇākara*).

There is another aspect in which the Naiyāyikas as well as the Vaiśeṣikas could not but recognise *śakti*. They have used the term *śakti* as indicative of *Īśvara*'s volition expressed in the form: 'let this word denote this sense.' Of the two kinds of *saṃketa*³ (convention), namely, *ājānika* and *ādhvānika*, the former is called *śakti* because of its non-human origin. The inherent power of a word to express the intended sense is said to be a matter of divine interference. It is the desire of God⁴ that determines the relation between a word and its meaning. A word with divine *saṃketa* is called *śakta*, the meaning denoted is called *śakya*, and the divine

1 अस्माकं तु निसर्गछन्दर चिराच्चो तो निमग्नं त्वयी-
त्यद्भानन्दनिधौ तथापि तरलं नाद्यापि संतृप्यते ॥—Kusumāñjali, 5. 18.

2 अखण्डानन्दबोधाय पूर्णाय परमात्मने ।

3 आज्ञानिकश्चाधुनिकः संकेतो द्विविधो मतः ।

नित्य आज्ञानिकस्तत्र या शक्तिरिति गीयते ॥—Vākyapadīya.

4 Desire as well as knowledge and activity is considered to be the triple *śakti* of God. His very desire is said to be the immediate cause of the cosmic creation. Desire is also stated to be a function of the soul (Nyāya-sūtra, 1. 1. 19).

volition rendering a word competent to convey the sense is called *śakti*.

The foregoing discussions have revealed to us the momentous fact that the Naiyāyikas could not afford to exclude *śakti* in its entirety in all their epistemological and metaphysical enquiries. In spite of their rigidity not to yield to anything that is either unreasonable or unnecessary, they had to maintain *śakti* in some form or other. *Śakti*, as we have seen above, made its way into their theory of causation, conception of godhead and into so commonplace a thing as the denotation of meaning by a word. We are really obsessed by an erroneous idea that *śakti* was absolutely left out of consideration in the domain of rationalistic criticisms.

ŚAKTI IN THE VEDĀNTA SYSTEM

Now we turn to the Vedānta. The first thing that strikes one's imagination is the position *śakti* has occupied in this system of thought. We propose to approach the problem of *śakti* as presented here by its accredited exponents, so as to reach a clear understanding of *śakti-vāda* in its various aspects. Śaṅkara has viewed *śakti* from both secular and spiritual standpoints. He has spoken of *śakti* as pertaining to matter and also as an inseparable attribute of Brahman. He has taken both empirical and transcendental views of *śakti*.

Bādarāyaṇa has explicitly mentioned the word *śakti* in his aphorisms 2.2.9 and 2.3.38. *Śakticiparyayāt* is intended to set aside the supposed agency of *buddhi* (intellect) in favour of *jīva*. What the author means to say here is this: if *buddhi*, and not *jīva*, is held to be the agent (*kartr*) of all operations, there will, then, be a disputable reverse of *śakti*,¹ i.e., what is really instrumental will falsely come to be regarded as the agent. To transfer the power of the agent to what is actually instrumental will undoubtedly give rise to an anomaly. Śaṅkara observes further that the agent, though powerful by itself, stands in need of some accessories for the accomplishment of an action.²

Though mention is made here of only two kinds of *śakti* (belonging to the agent and the instrument), we should say that this is of no consequence, since

1 कर्णशक्तिर्बुद्धेर्हीयते कर्तृशक्तिश्चापद्यते—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 3. 38.

2 शक्तोऽपि सन् कर्ता कर्णमुपादाय क्रियासु प्रवर्त्तमानो दृश्यते—loc. cit. It should be noticed that the Naiyāyikas have agreement with this view. The agent or cause of a thing must be such as possesses *śakti*.

a manifoldness of *śakti* has been maintained throughout the system under review. Vedāntins have carried us to the conviction that everything is endowed with *śakti*—a fact which will be more and more clear in course of our investigation.

Śaṅkara has alluded to various kinds of *śakti*, namely, *drk-śakti* (power of seeing), *sarga-śakti*¹ (power of creating), *pravṛtti-śakti* (power of moving), *bīja-śakti*² (the power of a seed), *dahana-śakti* (power of burning), *jñāna-śakti* (power of knowledge) and so on. Before cosmic evolution *śaktis* are said to be lying in an *avyakta* state³ (indeterminate) i.e. without names and forms. What we call 'creation' is only a manifestation of *śakti*. Śaṅkara has referred to *bīja-śakti* as an analogous example. A seed, for instance, has in itself the latent power of producing a tree⁴.

The belief in the existence of *śakti* is not a blank act of faith, but supported by empirical facts. Everything from a tiny flower to the mighty sun possesses *śakti* in an incomprehensible degree. A particle of sand, for instance, contains so much *śakti* in itself that we are not likely to make an exhaustive enquiry about it in

¹ दृक्शक्ति-सर्गशक्ति-वैयर्थ्यभयाच्चेत्—Ś. B. under 2. 2. 6.

कश्चित् पुरुषो दृक्शक्तिसम्पन्नः प्रवृत्तिशक्तिविहीनः—Ś. B. Ved. sūtra, 2. 2. 7.

² Op. cit. Ved. sūtra, 1. 4. 2.

³ बीजशक्त्यवस्थमव्यक्तशब्दयोग्यं दर्शयति—loc. cit.

The *bīja-śakti*, often denoted by the term *avyakta*, is said to be destroyed by *vidyā* (विद्यया तस्य बीजशक्तेर्दाहात् Ś. B.). We should not, however, fall into the mistakes that *avidyā* constitutes the ultimate seed of the world and brings forth everything into existence without the interference of God. Śaṅkara has been extremely cautious to render *avidyā-śakti* always subordinate to God. Vācaspati has made this point exceedingly clear (नन्वेवमविद्यैव जगद्वीजमिति कृतमीश्वरेणेत्यत आह—परमेश्वराश्रयेति । न ह्यचेतनं चेतनानविष्टितं कार्य्याय पर्याप्तमिति—Bhāmatī under Ved. sūtra, 1. 4. 3.).

⁴ वटबीजे यथा वृक्षः सूक्ष्मरूपेण तिष्ठति ।—Kulārṇava. 3. 56.

any conceivable duration of time. This being the case of a particle of sand, one can hardly estimate the power of one that governs the world by any stretch of imagination¹. Śaṅkara seems to have been fully aware of the various *śaktis* that are exhibited by magical stones, incantations and potential herbs, and admits frankly that these and other things are capable of doing miracles.²

Reference is made to the power of burning and illuminating as well as to the power of knowledge and glory which belongs to God and God alone. While impressing upon us the identity between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, Śaṅkara has compared *jīva* with sparks of fire, and goes on to say that fire and its sparks possess the equal power of burning and illuminating (*dahana-prakāśanaśakti*). Just as sparks are parts of fire, so the *jīvas* are considered to be the integral parts of the Supreme God and consequently they are entitled to share the same power of knowledge and glory (*jñānaiśvarya-śakti*) as characterise godhead.³ These two aspects of *jīvas* remain, however, suppressed owing to the influence of *avidyā* or association with mortal body.⁴ These powers are revealed when *jīvas* are allowed to extricate themselves from the shackles of *māyā*.

¹ यदा लौकिकानां प्रत्यक्षदृष्टानामपि शक्तिरचिन्त्या तदा शब्दैकसमधिगम्यस्य ब्रह्मणः किमु वक्तव्यम् ? Ratnaprabhā.

That the supreme Being possesses unthinkable power has been eloquently stated by all commentators of the Vedānta-sūtras. Cf. परमात्मनो विचित्राः शक्तयः स्युः । “त्रिविधशक्तिः पुरुषः पुराणो न चान्येषां शक्तयस्तादृशाः स्युः”—Mādhva Bhāṣya.

² लौकिकानामपि मणिमन्त्रौषधिप्रभृतीनां देशकालनिमित्तवैचित्र्यवशाच्छक्तयो विरुद्धानेकार्थविषया दृश्यन्ते—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 27.

³ Ved sūtra, 3. 2. 5. तत्रैवं सति यथाग्निस्फुलिङ्गयोः समाने दहनप्रकाशनशक्ती भवतः, एवं जीवेश्वरयोरपि ज्ञानैश्वर्यशक्ती ।

⁴ विद्यमानमपि तु तत्तिरोहितमविद्याव्यवधानात्—loc. cit.

देहयोगाद्वा सोऽपि—Ved. sūtra, 3. 2. 6.

While defending *satkāryavāda* and at the same time oneness of the cause and the effect, Śaṅkara has spoken of *śakti* as the activity of a cause revealing itself in the shape of an effect.¹ Cause and effect are only materialised forms of *śakti* and it would be a mistake to differentiate them. The primary condition of a cause is that it must be something possessing power. A thing has no claim to be regarded as a cause, if it is wanting in the requisite power of producing the effect. A cause without this natural power is a contradiction in terms. That a particular cause always gives rise to a particular effect under the same circumstances is a uniform causal sequence. Śaṅkara has concluded this topic with the observation that, *śakti* is the very soul of a cause and that which we apprehend as an effect is nothing but a vivid manifestation of *śakti*.² To Śaṅkara, therefore, both the cause and the effect are but forms of *śakti* interrelated to one another. In the transformation of a cause into effect we find only a formal change of *śakti*. It is assumed that an effect has its germs embedded in the cause before it is isolated therefrom.

The more important and sublime aspect of *śakti-vāda*—we mean the transcendental one—remains to be stated. The Vedāntins developed a spiritual insight which enabled them to enter deep into the nature of *śakti*. They have invested Brahman with all conceivable *śakti* and have repeatedly called it *sarva-śakti* and

1 शक्तिश्च कारणास्य कार्यनियमार्थं कल्प्यमाना नान्या (कार्यकारणाभ्याम्)—
Ś. B. under Ved. Sūtra, 2. 1. 18.

2 तस्मात् कारणास्यात्मभूता शक्तिः, शक्तेश्चात्मभूतं कार्यम्—loc. cit.

3 सर्वज्ञं सर्वशक्तिसमन्वितं ब्रह्म—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 1. 1. 1. सर्वज्ञात् सर्वशक्तेः कारणाद् भवति—Ś. B. 1. 1. 2. तस्य महतो भूतस्य निरतिशयं सर्वज्ञत्वं सर्वशक्तित्वं चेति—Ś. B. 1. 1. 3.

*aparimita-śakti*¹ (one with immeasurable power) and so on. The work of creating the world, though a task too great and monstrous to be performed by man, is said to be simply a sport with God. The reason of this is quite obvious. God's power knows no limits. By *sarva-śakti* Vācaspati understands that Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world².

Śakti appears to be the most conspicuous content in Śaṅkara's conception of Godhead. The mysticism of *śakti* carried him a long way by making him declare in clear terms that the Supreme Being is one in which all power has reached its fulness and perfection³. His idea of God rests upon this fulness of power. *Sarva-śakti*, we must remember, is an attribute that does not apply to anybody else. Man is a knowing being, but his knowledge cannot transcend the bounds of his own experience. The Supreme Being is called *sarvajña*, since He possesses the power of knowing everything⁴. The *śakti* of Brahman is called transcendental in this respect that it is nowhere limited by anything⁵.

As we have already stated, knowledge, viewed from the standpoint of *śaktivāda*, is essentially a kind of *śakti*.

¹ यद्यप्यस्माकमियं जगद्विम्बविरचना गुरुतरसंरम्भेवाभाति तथापि परमेश्वरस्य लीलैव केवलेयमपरिमितशक्तित्वात्—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 33.

² 'सर्वशक्ति' इति सर्वस्य जगत उपादानकारणं निमित्तकारणं चेत्युपपादितम्—Bhāmātī.

³ परिपूर्णशक्तिन्तु ब्रह्म—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 24.

⁴ सर्वज्ञानशक्तिमत्त्वेनैव सर्वज्ञत्वमभ्युपगन्तव्यम्—Ś. B. The idea of *sarvajña* follows as a corollary from that of *sarva-śakti*. One who is all-powerful must necessarily be all-knowing.

⁵ न च तस्य ज्ञानप्रतिबन्धो शक्तिप्रतिबन्धो वा कचिदप्यस्ति सर्वज्ञत्वात् सर्वशक्तित्वाच्च—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 22.

Knowledge as a form of *śakti* has been directly mentioned in the Vedānta-sūtra (2.2.9). Knowledge and activity are said to be only natural with Brahman.

As God is Supreme, so is His power. It is wonderful and passes all human understanding. In Him resides all power—strange and diverse. Though He is one without equal and superior, He is capable of doing and knowing everything¹. He can assume any form by virtue of His miraculous *śakti*². It is said that everything is functioning under the influence of this divine power. There is nothing that can work without it. The eyes could not see, the ears could not hear and the mind could not think, unless they were set to their respective functions by some unseen power from behind³. This is, in short, what the *seers* of the Upaniṣads have repeatedly told us about the unthinkable power of God.

How is it known that God is in possession of wonderful power? The Vedāntins have their answer ready. They hold that all-powerfulness of God is an item of faith which has been strongly advocated by the Upaniṣads⁴. A world of curious phenomena is only possible to be created by one who has wonderful power⁵

¹ न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्यते न तत्समश्चाभ्यधिकश्च दृश्यते ।

परास्य शक्तिर्वहुधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च ॥—

Svetāśvataropaniṣad, 6. 8.

² य एको वर्णो बहुधाशक्तियोगाद् वर्णानेकान्निहितार्थो दधाति—Op. cit. 4. 1.

एकस्यापि ब्रह्मणो विचित्रशक्तियोगादुपपद्यते विचित्रो विकारप्रपञ्चः—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra 2. 1. 30

³ Under Brhadāraṇyaka, 4. 4. 18 Śaṅkara has observed ब्रह्मशक्त्यधिष्ठितानां हि चक्षुरादीनां दर्शनादिसामर्थ्यम् ।

⁴ तत् पुनः कथमुपगम्यते विचित्रशक्तियुक्तं परं ब्रह्मेति ? तदुच्यते—‘सर्वोपेता च तद्दर्शनात्’ ।—Ś. B. Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 30.

⁵ मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्य जन्मस्थितिभङ्गं यतः सर्वज्ञात् सवशक्तेः कारणाद् भवति—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 1. 1. 2,

at his disposal. We cannot otherwise explain the strange and vast outlook of nature. The wonder excited by the phenomenal world is no doubt highly impressive and too great to be assigned to any ordinary cause ; it therefore made the ancient *seers* search after a cause that is more wonderful—the wonder of all wonders—and efficient enough to bring forth the world into existence. The creation of the world, which appears to be so difficult and complex a function that it could not be ascribed to any human power, is said to be nothing better than a mere sport of God (*līlā*). This is obviously due to His inconceivable power¹. The Vedāntins have invested Brahman with all properties that go to constitute a mighty cause. Knowledge, power and *māyā* are all said to belong to Brahman in a pre-eminent degree². *Māyā*³, as we shall see later on, is a *śakti* of exceptional magnitude that belongs to Brahman.

Next we proceed to consider the theory of *māyā* since it is closely connected with that of *śakti*. We are not going to attempt a study of the historical development of this knotty problem, but simply propose to bring out those aspects of the doctrine of *māyā* which are expected to throw some light upon *śaktivāda*. To give the precise signification of *māyā*, we should at once say that it is *śakti*, and perhaps the greatest form of *śakti* ever conceivable⁴. This *māyā-śakti* belongs to Brahman as his wonderful

¹ यद्यप्यस्माकमियं जगद्विरचना गुह्यतरसंरम्भेवाभाति तथापि परमेश्वरस्य लीलैव केवलेयमपरिमितशक्तित्वात्—Op. cit. Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 33.

² यस्मादस्मिन् ब्रह्मणि कारणे परिगृह्यमाणे सर्वे कारणधर्मा उपपद्यन्ते सवज्जं सर्वशक्तिं महामायं च तद् ब्रह्मेति—Op. cit. Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 37.

³ Udayana calls it *sahakāri-śakti*, since it is helpful to God. K. kār. 1. 20.

⁴ According to the Buddhist view, *avidyā* (ignorance) is a kind of *vāsanā* that is called *śakti* (cf. 'अस्माकं तु वितताभिनिवेशवासनैवाविद्या । सा च वासना शक्तिरुच्यते')—Kamalaśīla's comment on the *Tattvasaṃgraha*.)

possession¹ and is often designated *avidyā* in the language of monistic philosophy. *Māyā*, to be more clear, represents the extraordinary power of the Supreme Being; it has direct bearing upon the question of the world's creation, being the cause and origin of all phenomena. *Māyā* is ever active and lies at the root of the striking manifoldness of the universe. Having determined Brahman as inactive and non-interfering, Vedāntins were compelled to seek a force—to find out an active principle—that might account for all activities. The name *māyā* was given to this stupendous force with the help of which Brahman accomplishes everything². The conception of *saguṇa* Brahman is the conception of Brahman associated with *māyā*³. The ultimate reality to which this world with all varieties of names and forms owes its origin, sustenance and destruction is One that is *saguṇa*, i.e., involves the wonderful power or *māyā-śakti*⁴. Śaṅkara only conforms to the teaching of the Upaniṣads when he depicts Brahman more than once as *mahāmāyā* or *māyāvin*, that is to say, one that possesses *māyā*⁵.

In the Vedānta system a distinction has however, been made between *prakṛti* and *māyā*.⁶ The former, as

¹ *Māyā* is nothing but God's own power and consequently called divine in the Bhagavad Gītā ('देवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया' ।).

² न हि तया विना परमेश्वरस्य स्रष्टृत्वं सिध्यति, शक्तिरहितस्य तस्य प्रवृत्तिसम्भवात्—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra. 1. 4. 3.

³ For the definitions of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* Brahman see Ś. B. द्विरूपं हि ब्रह्मावगम्यते नामरूपविकारभेदोपाधिविशिष्टं, तद्विपरीतं च सर्वोपाधिविवर्जितम् ।

⁴ The definition of Brahman incorporated in 'जन्माद्यस्य यतः' is one of *saguṇa* Brahman.

⁵ Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 37. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, 4. 10.

⁶ प्रधानं हि सांख्यानं सेश्वराणामनीश्वराणां वेश्वरात् क्षेत्रज्ञेभ्यो वा वस्तुतो भिन्नं शक्यं निर्वक्तुम् । ब्रह्मणस्त्वियमविद्याशक्तिर्मायादिशब्दवाच्या न शक्त्या तत्वेनान्यत्त्वेन वा निर्वक्तुम् । इदमेवास्या अव्यक्तत्वं यदनिर्वाच्यत्वं नाम ।—Bhāmati under Ved. sūtra, 1.4.3

we find in the Śāṅkhya, is an altogether different thing from *puruṣa* on account of its unconsciousness and activity, while the latter appears to be an inexplicable paradox. What we mean to say is that *māyā* is neither an independent reality by itself nor anything that can be held apart from Brahman. This is why *māyā* is called *anirvacanīya*.¹ To describe her real nature is beyond the power of human language. Moreover, *prakṛti*, as portrayed in the Śāṅkhya, is independent of *puruṣa* in so far as its activities are concerned. But *māyā* stands on a different footing, being subordinate to Brahman to all intents and purposes.² Brahman and *māyā* are not reconciled by co-ordinating but by subordinating the one to the other.

Māyā is not permanent but only passing. It has no control over one who has visualised his own self. It ceases to exist the moment the veil of illusion is drawn up. *Māyā* is liable to disappear as soon as the supreme light of knowledge is kindled by the grace of God. This is why liberated souls, *i.e.*, souls upon which pure consciousness has dawned, do not again fall under the sway of *māyā* only to be enchained by the bondage of *samsāra*. Just as fire burns all faggots to ashes, so does divine knowledge set at naught all the activities of *māyā*.

A word only is needed to show the relation in which *māyā* stands to Brahman. As there is no real substratum other than Brahman, we are bound to speak

¹ सदसद्गमनिर्वाच्या मिथ्याभूता सनातनी ।—अव्यक्ता हि सा माया तत्त्वान्य-
त्वनिरूपणस्याशक्यत्वात् ।—Ś. B.

² परमेश्वराधीना त्वियमस्माभिः प्रागवस्था जगतोऽभ्युपगम्यते, न स्वतन्त्रा ।—
Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra. 1. 4. 3.

अविद्याशक्तेश्वराधीनत्वं तदाश्रयत्वात्—Bhāmātī.

of *māyā* as if it were pertaining to Brahman. But *māyā* has, in reality, nothing to do with Brahman. According to the strict monistic position maintained by the Vedānta, *māyā* cannot claim to be a genuine part or function of Brahman that is only characterised by pure consciousness.¹ Creatures like ourselves are only fettered by the shackles of *māyā*. Śaṅkara has put the idea very beautifully : totally unaware of our real self, entirely forgetful of the origin and destination of our journey, we are having a stupefying slumber under the influence of *māyā* from which we know no awakening.²

¹ जीवाधिकरणाप्यविद्या निमित्ततया विषयतया चेश्वरमाश्रयते, न त्वाधारतया, विद्यास्वभावे ब्रह्मणि तदनुपपत्तेरिति ।—Bhāmatī under Ś. B. 1. 4. 3.

² परमेश्वराश्रया मायामयी महासुप्तिः यस्यां स्वरूपप्रतिबोधरहिताः शेते संसारिणो जीवाः—Ś. B. under Ved. sūtra 1. 4. 3.

ŚAKTI IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF VEDĀNTA

So far as the position of Vedānta is concerned, our inquiry was originally limited to the Śaṅkara school of Vedānta. But there are, as we know, other schools of Vedānta. An attempt was made in the foregoing pages to analyse the Vedāntic outlook on *śaktivāda* as interpreted by its accredited exponent, *viz.*, Śaṅkara, in order to see how the doctrine of *śakti* was treated by the Vedāntin. What we noticed there is that Śaṅkara admitted the existence of *śakti* and conceived Brahman, of course in its *saguna* aspect, as the repository of all power—omniscience and omnipotence. Now we must try to understand the real spirit that lies behind the position of Śaṅkara. *Śakti*, according to his interpretation, has no independent existence apart from Brahman; it is entirely identical with Brahman and not a quality inherent in Brahman.¹ Strictly speaking, *śakti* or any quality like godhead etc. has no place in Śaṅkara's conception of Brahman.² To him Brahman is devoid of all *viśeṣa*—the Absolute to which nothing can be attributed in a transcendental sense. No doubt Śaṅkara has explained the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world from Brahman that is omnipotent, but he seems to have been careful enough not to vitiate the strict non-dualism, so cautiously nour-

1 Śaṅkara has made his position clear in his commentary under Śvetāśva
1. 3. देवस्य मायिनो महेश्वरस्य परमात्मनः आत्मभूतामस्वतन्त्रां न सांख्यपरिकल्पित-
प्रधानादिवत् पृथग्भूतां स्यतन्त्रां शक्तिं कारणमपश्यन् ।

2 तदेवमविद्यात्मकोपाधिपरिच्छेदापेक्षमेवेश्वरस्येश्वरत्वं सर्वज्ञत्वं सर्वशक्तित्वं च, न
परमार्थतो विद्ययापास्तसर्वोपाधिस्वरूपे आत्मनीशित्रीशितव्यसर्वज्ञत्वोदिव्यवहारः—
Śaṅkara-bhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 14.

shed by him, by acknowledging the separate existence of *māyā* or *śakti*. This standpoint does in no way contradict what he has stated all throughout. Vācaspati too subscribes to the same position. He holds that attributes like omniscience and omnipotence do not actually belong to Brahman.¹ He states elsewhere that *sarvajñam sarvaśaktisamanvitam Brahma* (Ś. B. under Ved. 1. 1. 1.) is intended to show the glorious aspect in which Brahman shines while in touch with *avidyā*, i.e., Brahman becomes omnipotent and omniscient only when it assumes the qualities as a result of his association with *avidyā*. This aspect accounts for Brahman being the cause of the world. The final causality of Brahman in the world-process rests upon the fact that it is omnipotent.²

Śrīkaṇṭha, who interpreted the Brahma-sūtras from the Śaiva point of view, was a commentator held in high respect by the Śaiva sect. As an exponent of the Śaiva tenets, he has very often substituted the word *parama Śiva* for Brahman and has described *śakti* in the divine person of Umā as His Supreme Power and eternal companion. In his opinion, *śakti*, like supreme Knowledge and Joy, is an essential aspect or attribute of Brahman.³ The benedictory verse begins with a reference to *śakti*,⁴ describing the Supreme Power as the ultimate basis upon which is built up the whole mechanism of the universe. He has subsequently spoken of Brahman as one who

¹ न तात्त्विकमैश्वर्यं सर्वज्ञत्वं च ब्रह्मणः, किं त्वविद्योपाधिकम् ।—Bhūmatī under Ved. S. 2. 1. 14.

² अविद्योपाधिकं रूपमाह—सर्वज्ञं सर्वशक्तिसमान्वितमिति । तदनेन जगत्कारणत्वमस्य दर्शितं शक्तिज्ञानभावाभावानुविधानात् कारणत्वभावाभावयोः—Bhūmatī.

³ Śrīkaṇṭha's conception of Brahman is given in the following words :—

निरतिशयज्ञानानन्दादिशक्तिमहिमातिशयवत्त्वं हि ब्रह्मत्वम् ।—

⁴ निजशक्तिभित्तिनिर्मितनिखिलजगज्जाल—etc.

possesses infinite *śakti*¹. Śrīkaṇṭha makes it perfectly clear that Brahman cannot be both the material and the efficient cause of the world unless it is held to be omniscient and omnipotent. Brahman as *Absolute* does not find favour in this system. Śrīkaṇṭha's main thesis consists of the strong belief that *śakti* constitutes the real essence of *Śiva-tattva* and that *parā śakti* is virtually inseparable from *parama Śiva*. To strengthen this position he has largely quoted verses from the *Śivapurāṇa* and the *Vāyupurāṇa*. The whole world, it is held, results from the mystic combination of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. Both of them are of the same nature, there being absolute non-difference as is the case with the moon and its beams.² It must be remembered here that this system, like the Sāṃkhya school, is not prepared to make any distinction between *śakti* and the object that possesses it.

Śakti represents the Supreme Joy in which the Lord delights. By *ānandamaya* Śrīkaṇṭha understands 'one associated with Supreme Power'³ and by *śakti* he recognises the natural but Supreme Power lying beyond the limitations of time and space and revealing itself in the triple form of Existence, Consciousness and Joy.⁴ *Śakti* constitutes the very self as well as the glorious qualities of the Supreme Being. Śrīkaṇṭha has not only referred to the Kaivalyopaniṣad in order to show

¹ अत एव सर्वज्ञमनन्तशक्तिविशिष्टं च ब्रह्म—under *Brahma-sūtra*, 1. 1. 5.

² शक्तिः साक्षान्महादेवी महादेवस्तु शक्तिमान् ।
तयोर्विभूतिलेशो वै सर्वमेतच्चराचरम् ॥
यथा शिवस्तथा देवी यथा देवी तथा शिवः ।
नानयोरन्तरं विद्याच्चन्द्रचन्द्रिकयोरिव ॥—*Śivapurāṇa*.

³ परमशक्तिः आनन्दमय इत्युच्यते ।

⁴ महासंविदानन्दसत्ता देशकालादिपरिच्छेदशून्या स्वाभाविकी परमशक्तिः परब्रह्मणः

शिवस्य स्वरूपं च गुणश्च ।

A8.

that the Lord Śiva is always associated with His *śakti*, called Umā, but has gone to the length of interpreting Umā as identical with *pranava* or Ultimate Reality.¹ As parts of Brahman, *jīvas* also are said to be a kind of *śakti* only with this distinction that they, unlike Brahman, are conditioned by accidental limitations.²

The existence of *śakti*, in one form or another, has been admitted by all the commentaries on Vedānta affiliated to the Vaiṣṇava school. Turning to the Śrībhāṣya, we find that Rāmānuja, as an advocate of qualified monism, was not only aware of the existence of *śakti* but made it an essential attribute of Brahman.³ To him Brahman or Puroṣottama (the term he often employs with the same connotation as Brahman) is the all-knowing and all-powerfull Being in whom all good qualities abide.⁴ Rāmānuja, elucidating the view expressed in the Viṣṇupurāṇa, has distinctly referred to the threefold *śakti*, namely, *parā*, *aparā* and *avidyā* (under Ved. sūtra, 1.1.1.). His interpretation of the term *nirguṇa* has some novelty in it. To call the Highest Being *nirguṇa*, Rāmānuja holds, is only to deny the existence of impure qualities in Him, but it does not necessarily imply that God is absolutely devoid of all qualities. Under Ved. sūtra, 2.1.34., Rāmānuja states that the power of the Supreme Being is incompre-

¹ प्रणवपर्यायेणोमाशब्देन परमप्रकृतिरूपा परा शक्तिरुच्यते—under Brahma-sūtra, 4. 4. 22.

² जीवः परिच्छिन्नशक्तिः ।—

³ In a sense, Rāmānuja might be called a worshipper of *śakti*, since the sect of Vaiṣṇavism to which he belonged, used to worship Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa as its principal deity.

⁴ सर्वज्ञः सर्वशक्तिः पुरुषोत्तमः सच्चिदानन्दमयः—Under Ved. Sūtra, 1. 1. 5.

It is said that the world, both intelligent and inert, constitutes the body of all-powerful Puroṣottama (सर्वचेतनाचेतनशरीरत्वात् सर्वज्ञस्य सर्वशक्तेः पुरुषोत्तमस्य—Śrībhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 2. 2. 31.).

hensible (*acintya*); and also refers to the fact that all objects have their own *śakti* which accounts for their individual nature. Beings are modelled and shaped by the force of their own action, while God only plays the part of a *nimitta-kāraṇa* in the complex affairs of creation. The fact that God is associated with manifold qualities and power does neither detract from His glory nor contradict the fundamental issue.¹ Rāmānuja, like Śaṅkara, has also referred to the Śvetāśvatara *śruti* (6. 8.) to bring out the manifoldness of Divine Power. He has also spoken of such energy of matter as the power of heat exhibited by fire (अमरादेरौष्ण्यादिशक्तियोगवत्).

Rāmānuja says that there is a school of Vedāntins which characterises Brahman as the only real entity and the final cause endowed with all kinds of *śakti* (सर्वशक्तियुक्तं सन्मात्रद्रव्यमेव कारणं ब्रह्म—Ved. sūtra, 2.1.15.). Under the same aphorism he has, in course of commenting upon the view that assigns transcendental reality even to the effect or makes the difference between *jīva* and Brahman only accidental, spoken of the non-difference between *śakti* and Brahman as well as of the transformation of Brahman's power (शक्तिपरिणामाभ्युपगमे शक्तिब्रह्मणोरनन्यत्वाच्च).

Rāmānuja seems to be quite in agreement with Śaṅkara when he interprets the *śruti* that brings out the non-dualistic nature of God. It is argued that God who constitutes the material cause of the world is in possession of such wonderful power that He did not require the help of anything else in the act of creating the universe. His will expressed in the form 'I shall be manifold' proved powerful enough for the emanation of the material world (जगदुपादानस्य ब्रह्मणः स्वव्यतिरिक्ताधिष्ठात्रन्तरनिवारणेन विचित्र-

¹ सर्वशक्तियोगो न विरुध्यते—Śrībhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 1.1.1.

शक्तियोगप्रतिपादनपरत्वाद्वितीयपदस्य । तथैव विचित्रशक्तियोगमेवागमयति,—
'तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेय' इति—Ved. sūtra, 1.1.1.).

Again, it is said that inference as a mode of proof goes to strengthen the view that the world, viewed as a mighty product, must have been the work of a Designer or Agent who is supposed to have the requisite knowledge and power for so wonderful an act as the creation of the world (कार्यत्वेनानुमतेऽपि विषये ज्ञानशक्ती कार्यानुमेये । कार्यत्व-दर्शनानुमितकर्तृगततन्निर्माणशक्तिज्ञानः पुरुषः—तदानीमेव कर्तुस्तज्ज्ञानशक्ति-विचित्र्यमनुमिनोति—Ved. sūtra, 1.1.3.).

Great, indeed, is the difference that keeps *jīvas*, distinguished from *Īśvara*. Though the main contribution of the *advaita* philosophy has been to establish the non-difference between the two, yet we must be allowed to represent the problem from a different standpoint. *Jīvas*, as we have said in connection with the *bhedābheda*vāda of Nimbārka, have limitations of their power, while God—the Supreme Being—does not at all suffer from any such limitations. Rāmānuja makes the distinction clear by holding that *jīvas* are not naturally entitled to perceive things that are subtle and lying at a distance. But there is, on the contrary, nothing that lies beyond the knowledge of God. He states further that the existence of God can be easily inferred from the fact that the world emerged from a cause which is not only powerful but capable of regulating it according to certain order of its own creation. It is practically a uniform law of nature that effects are always produced by causes having the requisite power. Now, what is this powerful cause? The answer to this question should be sought in the doctrine of *śakti* (जीवानां सूक्ष्म-व्यवहित-विप्रकृष्टदर्शनाशक्तिनिश्चयात् । दर्शनानुगुणैव सर्वत्र शक्तिकल्पना । न च क्षेत्रज्ञवदीश्वरस्याशक्तिनिश्चयोऽस्ति.....स्वाभाविक-सर्वार्थसाक्षात्कारतन्त्रियमनशक्तिसम्पन्न एव सिध्यति—Ved. sūtra, 1.1.3.).

Rāmānuja has described *avidyā* as a kind of *śakti* which again manifests itself in the twofold aspect, namely, *āvaraṇa* (illusion that hides the truth) and *vikṣepa* (illusion that causes the distraction of the mind). The world, it is held, could not be created by the Absolute but by one associated with *śakti* (अन्तर्भावितशक्त्यविग्रोपाधिकाद् ब्रह्मणः सृष्टिः—Ved. sūtra, 2.1.14.).

Nimbārka and Śrīnivāsa, the celebrated exponents of the Dvaitādvaita school of the Vedānta, have described *jīvas* as units of *śakti* emanating from God or Vāsudeva. In other words, beings, as parts of God, are the embodiment of *śakti* and evolve out of one that is the composite of all power. Both God and beings, related to each other as parts and the whole, might be viewed as *śakti*. It is particularly stated that difference between the two lies in the fact that beings are limited in their power and dependent on God—the source of all power and activity, while God is limitless in His power and self-contained.¹ Every being is a living symbol of *śakti*. The multiplicity of beings accordingly indicates a similar multiplicity of power. God is the perennial source of all power pertaining either to beings or matters. His power is inconceivable.² It is again stated that the all-powerful God gets Himself changed into the manifold aspects of the world simply by means of diffusing His own *śakti*. His power is so great and mysterious that He maintains a curious immutability of His self even in

¹ 'अंशो हि शक्तिरूपो ग्राह्यः' एष परस्य शक्तिः जीवोऽल्पशक्तिरस्वतन्त्र इति श्रुतेः।—Vedāntakaustubha. सर्वशक्त्युपेतं जगदभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानकारणं ब्रह्म—Śrīnivāsa under Ved. sūtra, 3.2.27.

² तस्मात् सर्वज्ञः सर्वाचिन्त्यशक्तिः विश्वजन्मादिहेतुः...भगवान् वासुदेवः—Nimbārka-bhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 1.1.4.

the course of His transformation into the diversity of the world-phenomena.¹

Madhvācārya and Viṣṇusvāmin have also acknowledged the existence of immense *śakti* in Brahman. The former has, with reference to the Viṣṇupurāṇa, attempted to convince us of the fact that the power of Brahman or Viṣṇu lies far beyond the range of human speculations, and the latter has described Brahman as the centre of all power.

साकारं सर्वशक्त्रेकं सर्वज्ञं सर्वकर्तृ च ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपं हि ब्रह्म तस्मादिदं जगत् ॥

Śuddhādvaitamārtanḍa.

¹ परिणामात् सर्वज्ञं सर्वशक्ति ब्रह्म स्वशक्तिविक्षेपेण जगदाकारं स्वात्मानं परिणम्य अव्याकृतेन स्वरूपेण शक्तिमता कृतिमता परिणतमेव भवति ।—Nimbārka-bhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 1. 4. 26.

A RETROSPECT

Before bringing the philosophical interpretation of *śaktivāda* to a close, we should briefly attempt a review of what has already been presented to the reader. The data we have collected in course of our investigation leave no room for doubt that the doctrine of *śakti* merited a prominent place in the philosophical literature of India. The problem of *śakti* came into more and more vividness in connection with the theistic notion of godhead. The seers of the Upaniṣads have often characterised the Supreme Being as *sarvajña* and *sarvavit*¹ implying thereby that He possesses the eternal power of knowing everything. One whose breath represents the four Vedas² is calculated to be the source of all knowledge. We ought to believe that all knowledge proceeds from Him. Again, He is said to have created Brahmā and taught him the four Vedas.³ He is also called the supreme author of the Vedas and is thus fitly styled *sarvajña*. All-knowingness is an aspect upon which great stress is laid in order to bring out the difference between *jīva* and *Īśvara*.

That the power of Brahman is unlimited and manifold has been beautifully illustrated by the Kenopaniṣad.⁴ It is stated : Unmindful of the final source of all power, the gods being puffed up at the successful termination of their warfare with the demons ascribed the victory to

1 Muṇḍaka, 1. 9. यः सर्वज्ञः सर्ववित्. Praśna, 4. 10. सर्वज्ञः सर्वो भवति.

2 Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 4. 5. 10.

3 Śvetāśvatara. 6. 18.

4 Kenopaniṣad, 3. 1.—4. 1.

their own strength. Their power was, however, put to a test. A piece of straw was just placed before them. *Agni* failed to burn it to ashes with all his power, and similarly, *Vāyu* proved incapable of moving it by applying all his force. They could not make out what the thing really was. Then came *Umā* (Brahman in the guise of *śakti*) who informed them that it was Brahman, the invincible, and the perpetual source of all power.

Śakti is divine. Each and every form of *śakti* of which man is master comes from the eternal source of energy that knows no waning. We owe all our power and activity to the same stock. It is said that the Great Divinity resides in us all in the shape of *śakti*.¹ The Lord said to Arjuna: I am the strength of all that is strong.² Stripped of His power, man is capable of doing nothing.³ This fact is well borne out by a narrative of the Mahābhārata.⁴ Arjuna, the famous wielder of the *Gāṇḍīva* and unrivalled hero of the Pāṇḍava line, is said to have become pitifully destitute of power when Kṛṣṇa left him. While escorting the wives of Kṛṣṇa from Dvārakā to Hastināpura, Arjuna met on his way the Ābhīras who tried to snatch away the females of Dvārakā from his protection. In the encounter that followed Arjuna could not unfortunately put the arrows into his *Gāṇḍīva*, and it seemed as if he had lost all his tricks

1 या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता । - Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa.

2 बलं बलवतामस्मि - Gītā.

3 This view is clearly elucidated by Śaṅkara in the opening verse of his Saundaryalaharī.

4 Maṇḍala Parvan, 6, 7.

ततोऽर्जुनो धनुर्दिव्यं गाण्डीवमजरं महत् ।

आरोपयितुमारभे यत्नादिव कथञ्चन ॥

धनुरादाय तत्राहं नाशकं तस्य पूरणे ।

यथा पुरा च मे वीर्यं भुजयोर्न तथाभवत् ॥

of warfare. This discomfiture on the part of Arjuna was simply due to the absence of Kṛṣṇa who had all along been his guiding power.

We have already stated that *Prakṛti* is a great centre of *śakti* out of which arise *mahat* and other *tattvas* in the course of evolution. There is no wonder that the primordial matter wherefrom the world is created must be either *śakti* itself or the repository of incalculable power. That this universe springs from *Prakṛti* and not from any other sources has been strongly supported by the author of the Sāṃkhya-sūtras on the evidence of *śruti*.¹

Avidyā or nescience is described in the Sāṃkhya-sūtras as a kind of *śakti* and *puruṣa* by virtue of his very nature is said to have no association with it.² It does not, however, follow from this view that *puruṣa*, viewed as the spirit or *caitanya* in all beings, has nothing to do with *śakti*. We may say, on the contrary, that *puruṣa*, like *Prakṛti*, is itself a *śakti*—only a sublime form of *śakti* as distinguished from the mere energy of matter. *Puruṣa*, as is well known, is eternal, pure, intelligent and naturally free from the bondage. Can any one legitimately claim to be so unless he is considered to be enormously powerful? Without power one can neither be intelligent nor liberated. What we are driving at is that both *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* of the dualistic Sāṃkhya are

¹ श्रुतिरपि प्रधानकार्यस्य—Sāṃ. Sūtra, 5. 12.

अजामेकां लोहितकृष्णशुक्लां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानां सरूपाः—(Śvetāśva, 4. 5.) is the *śruti* where one will find the earliest reference to *Prakṛti* as a combination of three *guṇas* and as the final cause of creation. Upon this is based the Sāṃkhya doctrine of *Prakṛti*.

² नाविद्याशक्तियोगो निःसङ्गस्य—Sāṃ. Sūtra, 5. 13.

capable of being interpreted as *śakti* or *śaktimān*, there being no difference between the two.

The Sāṃkhya doctrine of *satkārya* unravels the question which *śaktivādins* seek to impress upon us. A cause, in accordance with this view, retains in itself the power of producing an effect having likeness with it.¹ What is manifested as effect is said to remain in the cause, of course, in a subtle form. The world, so to speak, was lying in the *mūla-prakṛti* before its manifestation as such. This power of production, we should remember, constitutes the real nature of a cause. A thing without this requisite power cannot be regarded as a cause in the true sense of the term. The Sāṃkhya philosophy, as we have seen, started from the remotest cause endowed with immense power and proceeded step by step to show how the whole world came out of it in the process of evolution.² This evolution may be well described as diffusion of *śakti* bearing comparison with the diffusion of rays from the sun. The whole cosmic world, from the final cause to a particle of sand, seems to be a continuous stream of *śakti*, unceasing and ever-flowing. All that exists moves in a world of *śakti*, the entire space being saturated with innumerable particles of *śakti*. This is the last word of *śaktivāda*.

The Sāṃkhya-sūtras have referred to *śakti* in several places.³ It is held that everything involves

¹ कारणं यत्तद्वत्तत्तद्वत्तमेव कार्यम्—Bhāṣya under Sāṃ. Kārikā, 9.

² This view is somewhat analogous to the āgamik conception of *māhābindu*. From this all *kṛtṛa-bindus* are supposed to proceed. The ultimate cause of a thing is termed *kṛtṛa-bindu* which, though subtle like an atom, possesses a good deal of *śakti* so as to create all objects with their visible forms. A thing can not have its particular form and activity unless they are supposed to be existent in the *bindu* from which they evolve.

³ Sāṃkhya-Sūtras, 1. 117; 1. 132; 2. 24; 5. 31-36.

śakti which is manifested while it is at work. Plurality of *śakti* is also maintained.¹ Things with their various functions and activities indicate different types of *śakti*. The sense-organs, for instance, exhibit different kinds of *śakti*. Mention is also made of the 'manifestation of inborn *śakti*.' We come across different varieties of *śakti* particularly in those aphorisms where an attempt has been made to define *vyāpti* (invariable concomitance). Some teachers of the Sāṃkhya school are of opinion that *vyāpti* is nothing but the 'manifestation of natural power.'² Fire and smoke are said to have their own *śakti* which is comprehended by their invariable co-existence.³ Pāṇcāsikha does not lend his support to this view.⁴ He speaks of *ādheya-śakti* as what actually represents *vyāpti*, since he does not look upon *śakti* as the very nature (*svarūpa*) of a thing.⁵ It should be remembered that these two types of *śakti* (निजशक्ति and आधेयशक्ति) ultimately imply the same thing, there being difference only in names.⁶ A question may arise as to why the *śakti* of a thing is not first apprehended. The answer is very simple. Though *śakti* and *śaktimān* are held to be identical, it is the wonderful nature of *śakti* that first presents the object to our cognition.⁷

The Naiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas have spoken of God as all-knowing and all-powerful Being.⁸ *Īśvara*

1 शक्तिभेदस्तु अवश्यं वक्तव्यः—Vṛtti.

2 निजशक्त्यद्भवमित्याचार्याः—Sāṃ. Sūtra, 5. 31.

3 अस्ति वह्निधूमयोर्निजा शक्तिः, सा द्वयोर्दर्शनेन गृह्यते । सेव व्याप्तिरिति—Vṛtti.

4 आधेयशक्तियोग इति पञ्चशिखः—Sāṃ. Sūtra, 5. 32.

5 न स्वरूपशक्तिनियमः पुनर्वादप्रसक्तेः—Op. cit. 5. 33.

6 Op. cit. 5. 36.

7 यच्च वस्तुग्रहणे प्रथमं न गृह्यते, चित्रशक्तित्वात् पदार्थानाम्—Vṛtti.

8 Kusumāñjali, Kār. 5. 1. (विश्वविद्वयः)

who is the Maker and Sustainer of this world is one who possesses wonderful power. Udayana has described *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen actions) as *sahakāri-śakti* and the requisite power of a cause as *hetu-śakti*.¹ That he was alive to the existence of *śakti* is sufficiently clear from several of his remarks. Reference is also made to increase and decrease of *śakti*.² Atoms, as conceived by these two schools, are said to be active and powerful. Atoms, though formless, are yet considered to be active.³ Udayana has explained a passage of the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad⁴ to bring home the fact that atoms have motion (*patatra*). These atoms, eternal and full of motion (*śakti*), give rise to the visible world by their mysterious combination. Now what excites our inexplicable wonder is the power or activity with which even the smallest particle of matter is endowed. There is nothing that is without *śakti*. The world presents before us a scheme every part and fraction of which is full of power.

We have seen how *śakti* has been treated in the Vedānta system. We did not fail to notice particularly the important place which *śakti* occupies in Śaṅkara's conception of Brahman. According to Śaṅkara, Brahman is the repository of all power (*sarvaśakti*). *Śakti* forms an inseparable aspect of Godhead. In the Gitābhāṣya the personality of God has been described as a composite of six-fold power, namely, knowledge, glory, activity, strength, invincibility and authority.⁵ Śaṅkara has expressly alluded to the power of Brahman in the following words :

¹ Kusumāñjali, 1. 18.

² Op. cit. 2. 3.

³ निरवयवः क्रियावान् परमाणुः—Saptapadārthī. 103.

⁴ Śvetāśva. 3. 3.

⁵ स च भगवान् ज्ञानैश्वर्यशक्तिबलवीर्यतेजोभिः सदा सम्पन्नः—Gitābhāṣyopākramanikā.

‘ब्रह्मशक्त्याधिष्ठितानां हि चक्षुरादीनां दर्शनादिसामर्थ्यम्’—Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Bhāṣya. Tradition corroborated by the works attributed to his authorship runs to the effect that Śaṅkara was a devout worshipper of *Srividya*. His Prapañcasūtra and Saundaryalaharī bear ample evidence to strengthen this conviction. To those who advocate *śakti*-cult Śaṅkara was not only a strong supporter of Brahma-vidyā, but a staunch follower of Śāktaism too. The Śāktas found in him a typical representative of their faith and order. We shall not be far from the truth if we call Śaṅkara intrinsically a *śakti*-worshipper—one to whom *śakti* was the same as Brahman. Not less remarkable was his adherence to *śakti*-cult. There is evidence that Śaṅkara did not always take the word *vidyā* in the sense of *Brahma-vidyā* but sometimes applied the same term to such embodiments of *śakti* as Umā, Kālī etc.¹ He describes Umā as a *vidyā*—a female divinity—the most beautiful damsel ever conceived. He explains the name *Haimavatī* either implying one adorned with golden ornaments or the famous daughter of Himālaya; and goes on to say that she eternally lives in the company of all-knowing God.² What a lofty conception of *śakti*! In his commentary on the Kenopaniṣad Śaṅkara has thus given us the clearest indication of his sublime notion of *śakti*, an explicit hint as to the nature of *śakti* that occupied the best part of his spiritual thought. He makes here *śakti* the permanent associate of *Īśvara*, but elsewhere subordinates even *Īśvara* to *śakti*. This eternal union of Śiva and *Śakti* is one of the fundamental teachings

¹ विद्योमारुपिणी प्रादुरभूत् स्त्रीरूपा ।...सर्वेषां हि शोभमानानां शोभनतमा विद्या—Ś. B. under Kena. 3.

² हैमवती हैमकृताभरणवतीमिव बहुशोभमानामित्यर्थः । अथवा उमेव हैमवतो दुहिता हैमवती नित्यमेव सर्वज्ञेश्वरेण सह वर्त्तत इति—loc. cit.

of the *Tantras*. Śaṅkara has beautifully shown the subordination of Śiva to *śakti* in the opening verse of his *Saundaryalaharī* :

‘शिवः शक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभवितुं
न चेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ।’

We have noticed that *śakti* has not only been clearly recognised by the different schools of Vedānta, but treated as the supreme factor of creation and as an essential feature or attribute of God. Putting those facts together which we gathered from a study of the different commentaries on Vedānta, we find that *śakti* could not be eliminated from the philosophical notion of *Īśvara* and *jīvas*. The foregoing dissertations have convinced us beyond any shadow of doubt that nothing is more vitally akin to the problem of godhead than the conception of *śakti*. It is, however, not only the metaphysical and theological discussions that call upon us to admit the existence of *śakti*, but the whole material world, we must say, behaves like a huge network of *śakti*. Rāmānuja has given us a very familiar example to show that there is display of *śakti* everywhere in nature. A man even when he is suffering from a continued illness cannot be said to have lost his physical power altogether. *Śakti* in such a case remains only latent for the time being, just as fire sometimes seems to be destitute of its natural heat when the power of burning is counteracted by some artifices.¹

¹ रुग्णशरीरादिषु नियमनाद्यदर्शनं विद्यमानाया एव नियमनशक्तेः प्रतिबन्धकृतमप्रयादेः शक्तिप्रतिबन्धादौष्ण्याद्यदर्शनवत्—Śrībhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 9.

ŚAKTI IN THE PURĀṆAS

An elaborate exposition of the doctrine of *śakti* is to be found in the Purāṇas and Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Particularly, the Viṣṇupurāṇa, the Mārkaṇḍeya, the Devī-bhāgavata, the Kālikāpurāṇa and the Bhāgavata have thrown some important light upon those salient aspects of *śaktivāda* with which we are mainly concerned in these pages. They have not only given us a more accurate analysis of the doctrine of *śakti* but have furnished valuable materials for a clear understanding of what *śaktivāda* intends to present before us.

Let us begin with the Viṣṇupurāṇa which has been accepted by the Vaiṣṇavas as a work of great authority. First, we are asked to recall to our mind the well-known passage of the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad where mention has been made of the supreme power of Brahman. Power that belongs to Brahman is said to be natural and at the same time incomprehensible.¹ One whose radiant flash illuminates the whole world is undoubtedly the source of immense power. The Purāṇas have in various ways supported the view that God is all-powerful. This is an essential feature of Godhead. A question may, however, be raised here² : how is it possible for Brahman, who is devoid of all qualities, the purest of the pure and impersonal, to act as an agent in all the affairs of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world ? This is really

¹ शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्यज्ञानगोचराः ।

यतोऽतो ब्रह्मणस्तास्तु सर्गाद्या भावशक्तयः ॥

भवन्ति तपतां श्रेष्ठ पावकस्य यथोष्णता ।—Viṣṇupurāṇa. 1. 3. 2.

² निर्गुणस्याप्रमेयस्य शुद्धस्याप्यमलात्मनः ।

कथं सर्गादिकर्तृत्वं ब्रह्मणोऽभ्युपगम्यते ॥—Viṣṇu. 1. 3. 1.

a paradox. But the answer seems to be clear and ready. As has already been pointed out, everything possesses *śakti*, though it is not for man to grasp it in its entirety. A particle of sand constitutes a mysterious unit of power. A tiny seed contains in itself the power of producing a large tree. The scientist has not yet been able to make an exhaustive study of the power exhibited by an atom or electron. While an ordinary object is found to be the vehicle of so much power, it is not too much to say that the ultimate cause of the world is something that possesses wonderful and manifold power. It is to be particularly remembered that the power of Brahman is natural and not acquired, and that it is undifferentiated from his own self. Just as heat is the very nature of fire, so is the power of Brahman.¹ Brahman's power is called *parā* in the sense that it cannot be subdued or crippled by anything. The immensity of divine power is beyond all apprehension. The Purāṇas have thus strengthened our primitive belief that God's power is mysterious and manifold and that God is simply the *śakti* itself.² No one can deny that Brahman characterised by the *śruti* that runs as *yato vā imāṇi bhūtāṇi jāyante* and the Vedānta-sūtra *janmādyasya yataḥ* is the perfect embodiment of all powers.

The foregoing query and the answer taken from the Viṣṇupurāṇa may appear to be fallacious to the critical mind. Because the question put into the mouth of Maitreya refers to Brahman in its absolute aspect (*nirviśeṣa*), while the answer given by Parāśara contemplates

¹ यदा लौकिकानां प्रत्यक्षदृष्टानामपि शक्तिरचिन्त्या तदा शब्दैकसमधिगम्यस्य ब्रह्मणः किमु वक्तव्यम्—Ratnaprabhā. अतो ब्रह्मणोऽपि स्वभावसिद्धाः शक्तयः सन्त्येव पावकस्य दाहकत्वादिशक्तिवत् ।—Śrīdharasvāmin.

² The belief in the existence of divine power does not constitute a revolt against the monistic philosophy, because God's power is not something distinct from His own nature. No distinction is made between God and His power.

Brahman as one having incomprehensible power (*saviśeṣa*). The argument is, however, quite obvious. It was necessary for the authors of the Purāṇas to suggest an agent with the requisite power of creating this world. A qualified Brahman possessing immense power had to be maintained for the sake of proving the fact that Brahman is the supreme *agent* of creation etc.¹ Unless this divine agency is admitted, one cannot explain the threefold activity of Brahman as implied by the aphorism *janmādyasya yataḥ*. None but the supreme God is competent enough to create, sustain and dissolve the world. This competency does not belong to anybody else. The trinity of godhead, as conceived by the Hindus, stands for the threefold *śakti*, namely, the power of creation, the power of preservation and the power of destruction. (cf. ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवा ब्रह्मन् प्रधाना ब्रह्मशक्तयः ।—Viṣṇu, 1. 22. 56.).

The same Purāṇa seems to be in harmony with the fundamental point of the doctrine of *śakti* when it states that the whole world is the visible manifestation of Brahman's power.² This is the all-pervading character of *śakti*. Just as fire, it is said, remains in one place but spreads its lustre in all directions, so does the power of Brahman.³ Whatever we see with our naked eyes and whatever we feel within shows only the workings of *śakti*.⁴

Having shown *prima facie* that the world is moulded by divine power, the Viṣṇupurāṇa goes on to classify *śakti*.

1 निर्विशेषपद्ममनादृत्य ब्रह्मणि कर्तृत्वप्रतिपत्त्यर्थं शक्तयः साधिताः—Bhagavat-sandarbhā.

2 परस्य ब्रह्मणः शक्तिस्तथेदमखिलं जगत् ।—Viṣṇupurāṇa. 1. 22. 54.

3 एकदेशस्थितस्याग्नेर्ज्योत्स्ना विस्तारिणी यथा—loc. cit.

4 एतत् सवमिदं विश्वं जगदेतच्चराचरम् ।

परब्रह्मस्वरूपस्य विष्णोः शक्तिसमन्वितम् ॥—Op. cit. 5. 7. 60.

Mention is made of a trio of *śakti*,¹ namely, *parā* (Gods' power), *aparā* (the power of *jīvas*) and *avidyā* (the power by which *jīvas* are veiled or illusioned). *Parā śakti* refers to the supreme and irresistible power of God. It shines in its own glory. *Jīvas* (beings) are the embodiment of *aparā śakti* which takes its rise from the first, just like the rays issuing forth from the sun. *Avidyā* is the same as *māyā* whose function is to veil the truth. It has a strong hold upon the *jīvas*.²

Jīvas are naturally illusioned by the influence of *māyā*. They are like toys in her hands. Not only *jīvas* but the whole animate and inanimate world has got to remain under the inextricable sway of *māyā*. It should, however, be borne in mind that all things do not possess the same amount of *śakti*, there being a difference of degrees so far as *śakti* is concerned. A lifeless piece of stone and a fully developed living being are not endowed with the same amount of power. Different gradations of *śakti* are exhibited by objects. Gods and men are not equal in respect of *śakti*. Gods again differ from one another so far as their respective *śakti* is concerned. The Viṣṇupurāṇa has drawn up a list showing the different gradations of *śakti*.³

¹ विष्णुशक्तिः परा प्रोक्ता क्षेत्रज्ञाख्या तथापरा ।

अविद्या कर्मसंज्ञान्या तृतीया शक्तिरिष्यते ॥—Op. cit. 6. 7. 61.

² यद्यपीयं बहिरङ्गा तथाप्यस्यास्तदस्थशक्तिमयमपि जीवमावर्तितुं सामर्थ्यमस्तीति—

Jīvagosvāmin.

³

अप्राणवत्सु स्वल्पपालपा स्थावरेषु ततोऽधिका ।

सरीसृपेषु तेभ्योऽन्याप्यतिशक्ता पतत्रिषु ॥

पतत्रिभ्यो मृगास्तेभ्यः स्वशक्त्या पशवोऽधिकाः ।

पशुभ्यो मनुजाश्चातिशक्ता पुंसः प्रभाविताः ॥

तेभ्योऽपि नागान्वर्चयन्नाद्या देवता नृप ।

शक्रः समस्तदेवेभ्यस्ततश्चातिप्रजापतिः ॥

Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6, 7. 64-66,

The classifications made by the Viṣṇupurāṇa have striking coincidence with the three kinds of *śakti* recognised by Vaiṣṇava philosophy. *Antaraṅgā* or *svarūpa-śakti* answers exactly to the *parā śakti*, i.e., *śakti* that constitutes the very essence of *Īśvara*; *taṭasthā* (जीव) to the *kṣetrajña-śakti* and *bahirāṅgā* (माया) to the *avidyā-śakti*.

That every god is an embodiment of some kind of *śakti* is quite evident from the incident (relating to the birth of Kṛṣṇa) as narrated in the Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Bhāgavata. The *śakti* of each god is named after him.¹ The *śakti* in which Viṣṇu shines or with which he is permanently associated is known as *vaiṣṇavī śakti*. The Viṣṇupurāṇa has in one section distinctly referred to this *śakti*, popularly called *yoga-nidrā* or *mahāmāyā*, whose function is to illusion the world.² The terms *yoga-nidrā* and *yoga-māyā* are often found to express the all-obscuring power of Viṣṇu. It is also called *mahāmāyā*. When the world looks like a vast sheet of water at the end of a *kalpa*, Viṣṇu is said to come in contact with *yoga-nidrā* as his last but eternal resort. The Viṣṇupurāṇa has beautifully shown how the mysterious will of God is

¹ Names of *śakti* corresponding to those of respective gods are given in the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa (Devīmāhātmya) :—

आयाता ब्रह्मणः शक्तिर्ब्रह्माणी साभिधीयते ।
माहेश्वरी वृषारूढा त्रिशूलवरधारिणी ॥
कौमारी शक्तिहस्ता च मयूरवरवाहना ।
तथैव वैष्णवी शक्तिरुडोपरि संस्थिता ॥—M. Purāṇa.
ब्रह्माणीत्यपरा शक्तिर्ब्रह्मणोत्सङ्गामिनी ।—D. Bhāgavata.

² योगनिद्रा महामाया वैष्णवी मोहितं यया ।

अविद्यया जगत् सर्वं तामाह भगवान् हरिः ॥—Viṣṇupurāṇa, 5. 1. 70.

This all-delusive power of Viṣṇu is also called *yoganidrā* in the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa :

तन्नात्र विस्मयः कार्यो योगनिद्रा जगत्पतेः । महामाया हरेश्चैतत्तया संमोह्यते जगत् ॥

executed by the delusive influence of *yoga-māyā*. The Great God did not alone make His appearance on the earth, but came coupled with the *śakti* inseparable from Him. *Vaiṣṇavī śakti*, forming, as it does, the essential feature of Viṣṇu, is said to have come out of the womb of Yaśodā, her birth or manifestation almost synchronising with that of the Lord.¹ Everything, we are asked to believe, is done by the force of divine dispensation. It is particularly mentioned in this connection that Vasudeva was guided absolutely by a mysterious power in the accomplishment of his eventful mission on the memorable night of Kṛṣṇa's birth.² Vasudeva, working under the influence of an unseen power, took his newly-born son to the house of Nanda and brought the child lying by the side of Yaśodā to Mathurā.³ All this took place in an inscrutable way. Yaśodā was so much stupefied by the activity of *vaiṣṇavī-māyā* that she could not ascertain what was actually born of her.⁴ Apprehending danger from the issues of his sister, Kāṁsa threw the girl on a piece of stone obviously to kill her. But it was impossible to put an end to her life. The reason is quite apparent. *Śakti* is not liable to death or destruction. It is imperishable.

Then *śakti* is eulogised in the same Purāṇa as the essence of all that exists. Mention is also made of her

¹ ततोऽहं सम्भविष्यामि देवकीजठरे शुभे ।

गर्भे त्वया यशोदाया गन्तव्यमविलम्बितम् ॥—Viṣṇupurāṇa.

Cf. नन्दगोपगृहे जाता यशोदागर्भसम्भवा ।—M. Purāṇa.

² मच्छक्तिप्रेरितमतिर्विद्वद्वो नयिष्यति ।—Viṣṇu. 5. 1. 77.

The account given in the Bhāgavata seems to be more comprehensive.

³ नन्दव्रजं शौरिष्येत्य तत्र तान् गोपान् प्रसूतानुपलभ्य निद्रया ।

सुतं यशोदाशयने निधाय सुतामुपादाय पुनर्गृहानगात् ॥—Bhāgavata, X. 3.

⁴ यशोदानन्दपत्नी च जातः परमबुध्यत ।

न तल्लिङ्गं परिश्रान्ता निद्रयापगतस्मृतिः ॥—Op. cit.

various names such as Āryā, Durgā, Vedagarbhā, Ambikā, Bhadrā, Bhadrakālī, etc.¹ The *śakti* is thus depicted here as a personal deity endowed with forms of which we hear so much in the *Tantras*. The *śakti*-cult with all its contents seems to have been highly popular in the age of the Purāṇas. The worship of *śakti* with *pañcatattva* was not even unknown in that remote period of Indian history. It is maintained that those who worship *śakti* or, more properly, the embodiments of *śakti* as referred to above, with meat, fish and wine have the fulfilment of all their desires.²

The supreme character of *viṣṇu-śakti* is more conspicuously brought to light in the second part of the Viṣṇupurāṇa. The all-pervading God (Viṣṇu) is said to have all-illuminating power that crystallises in the shape of the three Vedas (*trayi*). The sun-god, it is stated, is a vivid symbol of this power and is therefore rightly called *trayīmaya*. *Viṣṇu-śakti* eternally abides in the sun and it is due to this inherence of power that the same god is rendered competent to shine so brilliantly and to remove the darkness of the world.

अङ्गमेषा त्रयी विष्णोर्ऋग्यजुःसामसंज्ञिता ।
 विष्णुशक्तिरवस्थानं सदादित्ये करोति सा ॥
 न केवलं रवौ शक्तिर्वैष्णवी सा त्रयीमयी ।
 ब्रह्माथ पुरुषो रुद्रश्चयमेतत्रयीमयम् ॥
 तथा चाधिष्ठितः सोऽपि जाज्वलीति स्वरश्मिभिः ।
 तमः समस्तजगतां नाशं नयति चाखिलम् ॥—

Viṣṇu. 2. 11. 11-15.

- 1 ये त्वामार्घ्येति दुर्गेति वेदगर्भेऽम्बिकेति च ।
 भद्रेति भद्रकालीति क्षेम्या क्षेमङ्करीति च ॥—Viṣṇupurāṇa, 5. 1. 82
- 2 छरामांसोपहारैश्च भक्ष्यभोज्यैश्च पूजिता ।—Op. cit.

There are certain topics in the Viṣṇupurāṇa bringing us to the essential contribution which the doctrine of *śakti* is expected to make to our theological and philosophical knowledge. To give a few examples. This Purāṇa, in its cosmogonic accounts, has made one important observation relating to the individual *śakti* of all things. The Lord, it is said, was the only efficient cause of the world and everything together with its particular nature was created by the force of the individual action. The position of a thing is determined by its own actions, done here or in a previous existence. In the matter of creation, we should remember, it is the action (*śakti*) of the individual that appears to be a dominating factor. To make the point clear, a thing becomes exactly what it should be according to its own actions and for this nobody else ought to be made responsible.

निमित्तमात्रमेवासीत् सृज्यानां सर्गकर्मणि ।

प्रधानकारणीभूता यतो वै सृज्यशक्तयः ॥

निमित्तमात्रं मुक्तुं नान्यत् किञ्चिदपेक्षते ।

नोयते तपतां श्रेष्ठ स्वशक्त्या वस्तु वस्तुताम् ॥

Viṣṇupurāṇa, 1. 4. 51-52.

The above verses, as we had shown elsewhere, have been quoted by Rāmānuja to elucidate the Ved. sūtra, 2. 1. 34. It seems clear from his statement that God cannot be held responsible for all the differences and inequalities of the world which, as we presume, result directly from the actions done by the individual. We are not, therefore, justified to bring the heinous charges of partiality and cruelty against God even in the face of such inequalities, inasmuch as He (शुद्धसत्त्व) takes no more active part than an efficient cause in the whole

work of creation. It is the same truth as is advocated by the follower of *karman*. While one may become either godly or saintly by virtue of good actions, it is not unlikely that others may degenerate into a contemptible stage by the perpetration of evil deeds (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 6. 4. 5.). We must notice here that Rāmānuja has taken the word *śakti* in the sense of *karman* (action).

It is said elsewhere that the Lord has one purest form (generally known as *parama pada*) in which He is meditated upon by the advanced *yogins*. The real or essential रूप of Viṣṇu is called *sat* (existent) and *amūrta* (formless); in it resides all kinds of *śakti*. This is the purest *śākta* form, being composed of no other element but *śakti*. This formless form, though inconceivable, is said to constitute the more sublime embodiment of Viṣṇu than the so-called *viśvarūpa* which Arjuna was fortunate enough to visualise in the divine person of Kṛṣṇa. A *yogin* is directed to keep his mind constantly concentrated upon Viṣṇu who is the substratum of all varieties of *śakti*. This is known as the purest form of mental concentration (शुद्धधारणा).

द्वितीयं विष्णुसंज्ञस्य योगिध्येयं महामते ।
 अमूर्तं ब्रह्मणो रूपं यत् सदित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥
 समस्ताः शक्तयश्चैता नृप यत्र प्रतिष्ठिताः ।
 तद्विश्वरूपवैरूप्यं रूपमन्यद्वरेमहत् ॥
 तस्मात् समस्तशक्तीनामाधारे तत्र चेतसः ।
 कुर्वीत संस्थितिं सा तु विज्ञेया शुद्धधारणा ॥

Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6. 7.

Reference is made to the divine power whereby God—the repository of all agreeable qualities—permeates the whole world (स्वशक्तिलेशावृतभूतवर्गः—Viṣṇu, 6. 5. 84).

He is again called 'composite of all power' (समस्तशक्तिः), and one who comprises in Himself all strength and power (स्ववीर्यशक्त्यादिगुणैकराशिः).

Other Purāṇas have in the same way dealt with *śakti*, particularly with such embodiments as Kālī, Durgā, Lalitā, etc. In some of them we find a developed form of *śakti*-worship as still persists in the land.

The Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa stands unique in its lengthy and interesting account of *śakti*. The so-called *Devīmāhātmya*¹, which gives a splendid description of the various activities of *śakti*, is in a sense the *magnum opus* of *śaktivāda*. These chapters dealing with the divine glories of *śakti* are recited all over India with the utmost reverence.

The *Devīmāhātmya* begins with an enquiry about the reason why intelligent beings are also found to be victimised by *māyā* or the lack of correct understanding.² Endowed though they are with the power of discrimination in all matters secular, men cannot rise above their earthly attachments. However learned and wise a man may be, he is bound to be caught in the meshes of *māyā*.³ It is impossible to extricate oneself from this eternal bondage. *Māyā* has got such a peculiar nature

¹ Most of the Purāṇas contain sections on the *Devīmāhātmya*. See *Devībhāgavata*, 3. 27; *Vāmanapurāṇa*, Chapters 18-19.

² तत् केनैतन्महाभाग यन्मोहो ज्ञानिनोरपि ।

ममास्य च भवत्येषा विवेकान्धस्य मूढता ॥—Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa

(*Devīmāhātmya*)

³ ज्ञानिनामपि चेतांसि देवी भगवती हि सा ।

बलादाकृष्य मोहाय महामाया प्रयच्छति ॥—Op. cit.

ज्ञानिनामपि चेतांसि परमा प्रकृतिः किल ।

बलादाकृष्य मोहाय प्रयच्छति महीपते ॥—*Devībhāgavata*, 5. 33. 52.

as to plunge one and all into the ocean of awful ignorance. One should not, however, suppose that *māyā* or *vaiṣṇavī-śakti* is only a bewildering phenomenon—power that stupefies all. As one representing the incomprehensible power of the supreme God, *māyā* has a far loftier significance in the Purāṇas and the *Tantras*. We should not lose sight of the fact that *māyā* combines in herself a twofold function. She is at once the cause of both bondage and salvation.¹ She is a divinity that creates the whole world, and if propitiated by selfless devotion, she is said to be so gracious as to make her devotee liberated from the bondage of *saṃsāra*.²

A question is next asked regarding the nature and activities of the Goddess who is called *mahāmāyā*. In response to the query of the king (Suratha), the sage continued to give various accounts of her mysterious appearance on the earth. First of all, our attention is drawn to the fact that *śakti*, considered as a goddess, is eternal, and that the visible world presents before us only a living image of *śakti*. Though *śakti* pervades the whole sphere of existence and is not at all liable to either production or destruction, yet many stories relating to her birth are told in our ancient mythology. This is really wonderful. In spite of her eternal character and imperishable form, *śakti* in her grosser shape is often said to be born whenever she makes her appearance obviously

¹ सा विद्या परमा मुक्तेर्हेतुभूता सनातनी ।
संसारबन्धहेतुश्च सैव सर्वेश्वरेश्वरी ॥—Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa.

यया व्याप्तमिदं सर्वं भगवत्या चराचरम् ।

मोहदा ज्ञानदा सैव बन्धमोक्षप्रदा सदा ॥—Devibhāgavata, 5. 33. 53.

² तथा विसृज्यते विश्वं जगदेतच्चराचरम् ।

सैषा प्रसन्ना वरदा नृणां भवति मुक्तये ॥—Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa.

to accomplish those things over which nobody has any control.¹ What seems to be the first manifestation of *śakti*, according to the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, is *yoga-nidrā* which extends her illusive power even over Viṣṇu. She is called *bhagavatī* as well as Nursing Mother and Lord of the world. Brahmā was the first to offer his prayer to the Goddess in order to get Viṣṇu awakened from his *yoga-nidrā*. This hymn to *śakti* is remarkably beautiful. What deserves our special notice is the fact (to which we have often referred in these pages) that the all-pervading character of *śakti* has been fully recognised here and expressed in unambiguous terms.² It is further stated that no language is adequate enough to express the glory of one that caused the trinity of gods to assume their corporal form.³ Being gratified at the sincere prayer of Brahmā, *yoga-nidrā* cast her bewildering power upon the demons (Madhu and Kaiṭabha) so as to hasten their death, and roused Viṣṇu from his slumber by withdrawing her influence which kept him so long in an unconscious state. How mighty and irresistible is the clutch of *māyā* ! To say the least, there is nothing that can counteract the operation of *māyā*.

Whatever be the degree of certitude that attaches to our belief in the incarnation of God, it is, at any rate, a genuine conviction deeply ingrained in our nature. *Śakti* as all-powerful divinity is said to have made her

1 देवानां कार्य्यसिद्धयर्थमाविर्भवति सा यदा ।

उत्पन्नेति तदा लोके सा नित्याप्रभिधीयते ॥—Op. cit.

2 यच्च किञ्चित् कचिद्वस्तु सदसद्वाखिलात्मिके ।

तस्य सर्वस्य या शक्तिः सा त्वं किं स्तूयसे तदा ॥—Op. cit.

3 विष्णुः शरीरग्रहणमहमीशान एव च ।

कारितास्ते यतोऽस्तस्त्वां कः स्तोतुं शक्तिमान् भवेत् ॥—Op. cit.

visible appearance in an eventful hour. The *asuras*, so says our ancient mythology,¹ were in constant warfare with the gods, and on many occasions the former proved more than equal to the latter. The demon, called Mahiṣa, was an indomitable hero who not only defeated his rivals, but made them part with their own possessions. The denizens of heaven were thus driven to a pitiable stage. Fallen in such a miserable plight, the gods had no other alternative than to approach Śiva and Viṣṇu for devising a plan so as to kill those demons. The story of their sad discomfiture evoked such intensive wrath that violent light came out of the mouths of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Simultaneously, similar light also issued forth from the body of other gods present there. There was a flood of light glowing just like a mountain on fire and sending forth its terrible effulgence in all directions. All this light got united and finally assumed the beautiful shape of a woman.² This is how *śakti* with her tangible form emerged out of divine light, concentrating all power in her person. Constituted as it was, her body was virtually a composite of *śakti* derived from the host of gods.³ She was then provided with necessary weapons to bring about the ruin of Mahiṣāsura. This being done, the Goddess was panegyrised by the gods in all solemnity and reverence.⁴ In this lengthy but sublime panegyric one will get a clear idea regarding the manifold activity and supremacy

¹ Reference to warfare between *devatās* and *asuras* is to be found even in Vedic literature.

² एकस्थं तदभून्नारी व्यासलोकत्रयं त्विषा ।—Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa (Devīmāhātmya.)

³ निःशेषदेवगणशक्तिसमूहमूर्त्या ।—Op. cit.

⁴ शक्रादयः सुरगणा निहतेऽतिवीर्ये
तस्मिन् दुरात्मनि सुरारिबले च देव्या ।

तां तुष्टुवुः प्रणतिनम्रशिरोऽधरांसा

वाग्भिः प्रहर्षपुलकोद्गमचास्देहाः ॥—Op. cit.

of *śakti*. *Śakti* is here depicted as the ultimate cause of the world and rightly described as *ādyā-prakṛti* (primordial substance).¹ The main current of *śaktivāda* is summed up in the closing words of the hymn :

‘भगवत्या कृतं सर्वं न किञ्चिदवशिष्यते’² ।

It shows unmistakably that the gods were aware of the stern fact that everything is being done by the secret hand of *śakti*.

The Vāmanapurāṇa gives a similar account regarding the emergence of Kātyāyanī from the accumulated power of the gods.³ The story relating to the death of Mahiṣāsura and other demons is also described here almost in the same way.

The Devībhāgavata, as the very name implies, is one of the Purāṇas that deals, among other things, with *śakti* as the supreme divinity. It has likeness with the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa in so far as the all-embracing aspect of *śakti* is concerned. This Purāṇa, which is claimed by the Śāktas as a work of great authority, begins with an invocation to *ādyā-vidyā* as representing the conscious element in all things.⁴ *Śakti* is here called the eternal Supreme Goddess and the ultimate cause of all causes.⁵ *Śakti* is said to exist in all things, and

¹ हेतुः समस्तजगतां त्रिगुणापि दोषै-

र्न ज्ञायसे हरिहरादिभिरप्यपारा ।

सर्वाश्रयाखिलमिदं जगदंशभूत-

मन्याकृता हि परमा प्रकृतिस्त्वमाद्या ॥—Op. cit.

² सर्वं कृतं त्वया देवि कार्यं नः खलु साम्प्रतम् ।—Devībhāgavata, 5. 20.

³ Vāmanapurāṇa, 18. Cf. Devībhāgavata, 5. 8.

⁴ सर्वचैतन्यरूपां तामाद्यां विद्यां च धीमहि ।—Devībhāgavata.

⁵ नित्यैव सा परा देवी कारणानां च कारणम् ।—Op. cit.

it is justly held that a being, when stripped of *śakti*, is no better than a dead body.¹ Proceeding to show that *śakti* reigns supreme everywhere, the Devībhāgavata² has dilated upon the story of 'Umā-Indra' as it occurs in the Kenopaniṣad. It is said that the Supreme Being effects the creation of the world by assuming the double form, the one comprising pure existence, joy and consciousness, and the other representing *māyā* or *prakṛti*. We are particularly warned not to confuse here *māyā* with the power of illusion, but we are asked to look upon it as what is identical with the Great Goddess—the Supreme Power.

भागद्वयवती यस्मात् सृजामि सकलं जगत् ।

तत्रैकभागः संप्रोक्तः सच्चिदानन्दनामकः ॥

मायाप्रकृतिसंज्ञस्तु द्वितीयो भाग ईरितः ।

सा च माया परा शक्तिः शक्तिमत्यहमीश्वरी ॥

Devībhāgavata, 12.8. 64-65.

This Purāṇa touched upon the cardinal point of *śaktivāda*³ when it laid down that *śakti* represents both *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, there being essentially no difference between the two. Just as power of burning is not distinguishable from fire, so *śakti* or *paramā prakṛti* is not separable from *parama puruṣa* (Supreme Being).⁴ A point which is none the less important from the Vedāntic outlook has also been noticed. Regarding the personification of *śakti*, the Devībhāgavata says :

1 वर्त्तते सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिः सर्वात्मना नृप ।

शववच्छक्तिहीनस्तु प्राणी भवति सर्वथा ॥—Op. cit.

2 Devībhāgavata, 12. 8.

3 सेयं परा शक्तिः परमेश्वरादभिज्ञा—Comment on Tattvaparakāśa.

4 स्वयं पुमांश्च प्रकृतिस्तावभिज्ञौ परस्परम् ।

यथा वह्नेस्तस्य शक्तिर्न भिन्नास्त्येव कुत्रचित् ॥—Devībhāgavata, 9. 38. 28.

though *śakti* in its absolute aspect is formless, yet it is possible for her to assume visible forms only for the sake of showing grace to the devotee.¹ The passage² 'शक्तिस्त्वमेव किल शक्तिमतां सदैव' voices the same truth as is expressed by 'बलं बलवतामस्मि' (Gītā).

The Brahmaivaivartapurāṇa speaks about *śakti* in the same strain.³ *Śakti* is called Great Mother and *mūla-prakṛti* out of which evolves the whole universe; it is held to be the real essence and ultimate substratum of all that exists.

Having described *śakti* as the all-powerful author of the universe, the Bṛhannāradiya has enumerated the various names of the Goddess.⁴ This is intended to show that *śakti* is ultimately one and without a second, even though her names and manifestations appear to be diverse and manifold⁵.

¹ सेयं शक्तिर्महामाया सच्चिदानन्दरूपिणी ।

रूपं त्रिभक्त्यरूपा च भक्तानुग्रहेतवे ॥—Op. cit.

यतीनां मन्त्रिणां चैव ज्ञानिनां योगिनां तथा । ध्यानपूजानिमित्तं हि तमुर्गृह्णाति मायया ॥

Suprabheda Tantra.

² D. Bhāgavata 3. 4. 44.

³ Brahmaivaivartapurāṇa (Prakṛti-khaṇḍa), 2. 66. 7-10.

⁴ उमेति केचिदाहुस्तां शक्तिं लक्ष्मीं तथा परे ।

भारतीत्यपरे चैनां गिरिजेत्यम्बिकेति च ॥

दुर्गेति भद्रकालीति चण्डी माहेश्वरीति च ।

कौमारी वैष्णवी चेति वाराहीति तथा परे ॥—Bṛhannāradiya.

⁵ एकस्यैव समस्तस्य ब्रह्मणो द्विजसत्तम । नास्त्रां बहुत्वं लोकानामुपकारकरं शृणु ॥—

Viṣṇudharmottara.

HYMNS TO ŚAKTI

Reference has already been made to the Devī-sūkta the recital of which still forms an important part of śakti-worship. What lies behind this famous hymn is the recognition of śakti as the supreme cosmic principle regulating the whole universe. And this recognition brought forth solemn invocations from gods and ancient seers. The gods, as we usually find, were the first to offer their sincere prayers to the Divine Mother, considering her to be the most benevolent power that brings welfare to the world, removes all kinds of obstacles and overcomes all sorts of evils. We have evidence to believe that most of the gods were worshippers of śakti, and some of them are also mentioned as founders of different schools of śakti-worship.¹ The majority of the Purāṇas contains hymns to śakti or her various embodiments. The authorship of some of these hymns is attributed to such prominent deities as Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā.

The Mahābhārata contains a beautiful hymn addressed to the goddess Durgā.² Yudhiṣṭhira, while proceeding to the city of Virāṭa, made this remarkable prayer obviously for the purpose of securing the good

¹ Among the twelve votaries of Śrīvidyā we find the names of many gods.

मनुश्चन्द्रः कुवेश्र लोपामुद्रा च मन्मथः ।

अगस्तिरग्निः सूर्यश्च इन्द्रः स्कन्दः शिवस्तथा ॥

क्रोधभट्टारको देव्या द्वादशामी उपासकाः ॥—quoted by Bhāskara-

rāya in his commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma.

² Mahābhārata (Virāṭaparvan), 8.

grace of the Great Mother.¹ Allusions to the mythological account of her birth in the womb of Yaśodā as well as to the incident of her having been thrown on a stone by Kāṃsa are recorded here.² She is said to be adored and worshipped by the gods for the welfare of the three worlds. She is also called by such popular names as Mahiṣāsuranāśinī and Kālī. A derivative signification of the name Durgā is also found here.³ Being exceedingly delighted with the sincerity of his prayer, the Goddess, always merciful to her devotees, made her appearance before Yudhiṣṭhira and promised him victory in warfare and the attainment of his lost kingdom.⁴

In the Mahābhārata (Bhīṣmaparvan, 23) we find that Arjuna, following the direction of Kṛṣṇa,⁵ recited the famous hymn to Durgā for the sake of gaining victory in the ensuing war.

Another lengthy and famous hymn to śakti is the *Lalitāsahasranāma* as recorded in the later part of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. Bhāskara-rāya, the well-known Tāntrik savant, wrote a learned commentary on it under the name *Saṁbhāgyabhāskara*. Śakti is here eulogised in her popular embodiment, namely, Lalitā or Ambikā—the

¹ विराटनगरं रम्यं गच्छमानो युधिष्ठिरः ।

अस्तुवन् मनसा देवीं दुर्गां त्रिभुवनेश्वरीम् ॥—Op. cit.

² यशोदागर्भसम्भूतां नारायणवरप्रियाम् ।

and शिलातटविनिक्षिप्तमाकाशं प्रति गामिनीम् ॥—Op. cit.

³ दुर्गात्तारयसे दुर्गे तस्माद्दुर्गा स्मृता जनैः ।—Op. cit.

⁴ भविष्यत्यचिरादेव संग्रामे विजयस्तव ।

मम प्रसादाच्चिर्गत्य हत्वा कौरववाहिनीम् ॥

राज्यं निष्कण्टकं कृत्वा भोक्ष्यसे मेदिनीं पुनः ।—Op. cit.

⁵ शुचिर्भूत्वा महाबाहो संग्रामाभिमुखेस्थितः ।

पराजयाय शत्रूणां दुर्गास्तोत्रमुदीरय ॥—Op. cit.

highest divinity worshipped by the followers of Śrīvidyā.¹ It is stated that *śakti* in her threefold form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra effects respectively creation, maintenance and destruction of the world.² Reference is made to two kinds of *śakti*, namely, *cit* (conscious) and *jada* (unconscious).³ To the goddess are assigned many significant epithets such as *tattvāsanā*,⁴ *kulakundālayā*,⁵ *mūrtāmūrtā*,⁶ etc. The *Hārītāyana-saṃhitā* in its dialogue between Dattātreyā and Paraśurāma has dwelt at some length upon the supreme nature of Śrīvidyā.

Ānandalaharī, also called *Saundaryalaharī*,⁷ is another hymn to Śrīvidyā that commands high respect and reputation. This *stotra* has a peculiar interest, since it emanated from one who is universally acknowledged as the greatest exponent of *advaita* philosophy.

Many such hymns might be gathered from the vast range of Sanskrit literature. We should not forget that these and similar other *stotras* constitute a considerable part of our literature, and that they are impregnated with highly religious and moral ideals. Sarvānanda⁸ and

¹ Bhāskararāya has cleverly shown that this hymn dealing, as it does, with the various names of Lalitā, contains all the secrets of *śakti*-worship.

² सृष्टिकर्त्री ब्रह्मरूपा गोप्त्री गोविन्दरूपिणी ।

संहारिणी रुद्ररूपा तिरोधानकरीश्वरी ॥—*Lalitāsahasranāma*.

Viṣṇupurāṇa has—‘ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवा ब्रह्मन् प्रधाना ब्रह्मशक्तयः’ ।

³ चिच्छक्तिश्चेतरूपा जडशक्तिर्जडात्मिका ।—*Lalitāsahasranāma*.

⁴ शिवादिक्षित्यन्तानि षट्त्रिंशत्तत्त्वान्येवासनं योगपीठाख्यमासनं यस्याः—
Bhāskararāya.

⁵ Cf. अवाप्य स्वां भूमिं भुजगनिभमध्युष्टबलयं
स्वमात्मानं कृत्वा स्वपिषि कुलकुण्डे कुहरिणी ।—*Ānandalaharī*.

⁶ द्व वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे मूर्त्तं चामूर्त्तं चेति ।—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 3. 1.

⁷ See my article entitled ‘*Saundaryalaharī*’ published in the ‘*Vaṅgaśrī*.’

⁸ Sarvānanda is said to be the author of a Tantric text named ‘*Sarvollāsa*.’

Pūrṇānanda, the two famous *śakti*-worshippers of Bengal, are said to have composed beautiful hymns describing the ten *Mahāvidyās* whom they were fortunate enough to see by their intensity of *sādhana*. Only a part of these hymns is to be found in the *Sarvānandataranginī*.

Turning to the *Tantras*, we find that the recitation of the *stotras* constitutes one of the seven main items of *śakti*-worship. Just as we have specific *dhyaṇa* describing the particular physical form of each and every embodiment of *śakti*, so we have separate sets of *stotras* addressed to each of them. The *Karpūrādi-stotra* the authorship of which is ascribed to Mahākāla himself is a very favourite hymn with the Śāktas.

WORSHIP OF ŚAKTI

The worship of *śakti* in an anthropomorphic form is found to be of great antiquity in India. It is organically associated with the cult of *Śiva* which prevailed in the land from pre-historic times.¹ The cult of the Great Mother Goddess has its prototypes in various other ancient countries, namely, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia and Greece.² Some opine that this cult is of non-Aryan origin. It is not unlikely that the Aryans had found this type of worship already in existence among the primitive tribes, and afterwards assimilated it in their own way. This sort of absorption or Aryanisation of ancient customs and modes of worship were not altogether impossible and unfrequent in the annals of India.

While *śakti* is generally worshipped along with *Śiva*, 'it is noteworthy that many primitive tribes used to worship *śakti* exclusively.' Whatever be its origin and antiquity, *śakti*-worship seems to have obtained a permanent footing in India from time beyond recollection. Recent discoveries at Mahenjo-daro and Harappa have brought to light so many images of male and female deities that one is naturally inclined to believe that the people of those ancient lands 'had reached the stage of worshipping their deities in anthropomorphic form.' One finds it extremely difficult to ascertain how and when primitive people had begun to represent their gods

¹ Mahenjo-daro and the Indus Valley Civilization, vol. 1. p. 57.

² See 'Egyptian Myth and Legend' and 'Myths of Babylonia' by D. A. Mackenzie. The Great Goddess is variously called: Isis, Istar, Taimat, Osiris, Rhea etc.

in human shape.¹ What seems to appeal to one's reason is that a strong religious instinct induced men to assign human shape to the deities they worshipped, to humanise the controlling forces or spirits they perceived in the workings of nature. Man could hardly escape the sense of being in the presence of an all-pervading *śakti* which he readily converted into a divinity and ultimately grasped her as a merciful mother. The universal motherhood of *śakti* seems to be the primitive notion of godhead. What we should learn from this spontaneous attitude of the mind is the innate belief in the kindness and goodness of the mother. One should look upon it as the real foundation of *śakti*-worship.

The relics of *śakti*-worship are found in abundance all over India.² The extent to which *śakti*-cult prevailed and found favour in the land is quite evident from the numerous images of the Goddess still preserved and worshipped in different parts of India. The majority of holy shrines, particularly the fiftyone *Pīṭhas*, are consecrated to the different embodiments of *śakti*. According to the current tradition, the sacred parts of the body of *Satī*, scattered all over the country, gave rise to a number of holy places for pilgrimage. The two mountains, namely, the Himālaya and the Vindhya, are specially sanctified as being the traditional resorts of the Great Mother and She is consequently called Haimavati and Vindhya-vāsinī. The images of *śakti* are also to be met with even in those places which are popularly held as Vaiṣṇava *kṣetra*. Thus, we find Kātyāyanī in

¹ Yāska has discussed the question relating to the number and form of the gods. He has tried to show on the authority of the Vedas that the gods are manly in appearance and that they are often described as if they were human in shape (पौरुषविधिकेरङ्गः संस्तूयन्ते—Nirukta).

² The image of Tārā was worshipped by the Buddhists outside India.

Vṛndāvana and Vimalā in Puruṣottama (Puri). In many families the embodiments of *śakti* were worshipped as household deities. This system seems to have been current from the age of the Purāṇas. The images of Kālī and Durgā are still daily worshipped by a large section of the Hindus.

According to the current tradition, Rāma was the first to celebrate the worship of the Great Mother (Durgā) on the eve of the great war that ensued between himself and Rāvaṇa. It is stated in the Bṛhannandikeśvara-purāṇa that Rāma untimely awakened the Goddess, since he was in a hurry to bring about the ruin of his formidable rival. The worship of *śakti* is calculated to have given him so much strength that he could easily come out victorious from the terrible warfare. This celebration took place in the month of Āśvina, and since then the autumn is regarded as specially sacred for the invocation and adoration of the Goddess.¹

The Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa contains a description of *śakti*-worship as was celebrated by Suratha and Samādhi. They are said to have made an earthen image of the Goddess (Durgā) and worshipped it with all solemnity on the bank of the river Nerboda.² Their adoration, intense and selfless, was attended with success. The Great Mother actually appeared before them in order to grant their passionate prayer.

¹ This particular period of the year is popularly called *Devī-pakṣa*. According to the *Devibhāgavata* (3. 30.), Rāma, under instruction from the sage Nārada, worshipped the Goddess Durgā having duly observed the *navarātra-vrata*. On the completion of the ceremony, Rāma performed the rites of *vijayā* and then proceeded to the city of Laṅkā with his monkey-regiments to kill the Rākṣasa-king Rāvaṇa.

² तौ तस्मिन् पुलिने देव्याः कृत्वा मूर्तिं महीमयीम् ।
अर्हणां चक्रतस्तस्याः पुष्पधूपाम्रितपणैः ॥—M. Purāṇa.

The worship of Kātyāyanī by the damsels of Vraja has been narrated by the Bhāgavata.¹ The cowherd-girls are said to have prepared a beautiful earthen image of the Goddess on the bank of the Jumna and duly worshipped the same by observing strict rituals and discipline. All this was done for no other purpose than getting Kṛṣṇa as their husband. This was a religious vow inspired by deep devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Kātyāyanī is still worshipped in that part of the country on the conviction that she is a divinity that fulfills all kinds of desires (*kāmadā*).

More than one story is narrated by the Devī-bhāgavata regarding the various forms of *śakti*-worship as well as the establishment of the images of *śakti* in different parts of India. Let us first speak of the sacrifice to *śakti* as was celebrated by Viṣṇu in days of yore. Viṣṇu is said to have performed a sacrifice (*Ambikā-yajña*) according to the *āgamik* rites for the sake of securing the good grace of the Divine Mother.² That he was a devout worshipper of *śakti* is quite evident from the fact that Viṣṇu had once gone to the mysterious isle, situated in the midst of the 'ocean of nectar' and decorated with invaluable jewels, where he had the good fortune of visualising the Great Mother and obtaining the sacred *mantra*.³ As we have already pointed out in these pages, the greatness of Viṣṇu as well as of other deities bespeaks only the grace of *śakti*. It is further stated that each and every incarnation

1 हेमन्ते प्रथमे मासि नन्दव्रजकुमारिकाः ।

चेरुहविष्यं भुञ्जानाः कात्यायन्यच्च नवतम् ॥—Bhāgavata. X.

2 यज्ञं कर्तुं मनश्चक्रे अम्बिकाया रमापतिः ।—Devībhāgavata, 3. 14. 30.

3 सुधासिन्धुस्थितं द्वीपं सस्मार मणिमण्डितम् ।

यत्र दृष्टा महामाया मन्त्रश्चासादितः शुभः ॥—Op. cit.

of Viṣṇu is associated with a corresponding *śakti* which adds so much to the glory of Viṣṇu and really accounts for all that is done by him.¹

The legend of Sudarśana is an interesting study. Sudarśana, son of Dhruvasandhi, was a seion of the solar dynasty. In his early life he had to fight against many odds and was in a state of utter destitution. While yet a mere boy, he was, however, initiated into *kāmabīja* in a mysterious way. This event altogether changed the subsequent career of his life and turned him into a devout worshipper of *śakti*. Constant repetition of the sacred syllable conferred all blessings upon him. Having regained the lost kingdom of his father, Sudarśana went to Ayodhyā and built a beautiful temple there in which was placed the image of the Great Mother in a right royal fashion.² Since that time the worship of the Goddess has been prevalent in Kośala.³

Subāhu, the king of Kāśī, made a similar temple at Benares and established the image of Durgā which is still visited by innumerable pilgrims.⁴

- 1 अथतारेषु सर्वेषु शक्तिस्ते सहचारिणी ।
अविष्यति ममांशेन सर्वकार्यप्रसाधनी ॥—Op. cit.
- 2 प्रासादं कारयामासः शिल्पिभिः समनोहराम् ॥
प्रतिमां कारयित्वाथ मुहूर्त्तेऽथ शुभे दिने ।—op. cit. 3. 26. 32.
- 3 देव्याः पूजा तदा प्रीत्या कोशलेषु प्रवर्त्तिता ।—op. cit.
- 4 सुबाहुरपि काश्यान्तु दुर्गायाः प्रतिमां शुभाम् ।
कारयित्वा च प्रासादं स्थापयामास भक्तिः ॥—op. cit.

SAKTI IN VAIṢṆAVA LITERATURE

Having sketched the outlines of the doctrine of *śakti* according to the Purāṇas, we now proceed to have a glimpse into Vaiṣṇava literature. From what we have hitherto said in course of our enquiry into the Purāṇas, specially Viṣṇupurāṇa, and the Vaiṣṇava interpretations of the Vedānta-sūtras, one is expected to gain some idea as to the true position held by *śakti* in the estimate of the Vaiṣṇava sects. *Śakti* occupies a noteworthy place in Vaiṣṇava literature and particularly in Vaiṣṇava philosophy. The doctrine of *śakti*, as we presume, derived much of its importance and popularity at the hands of Vaiṣṇava teachers. Considered from the Vaiṣṇava point of view, *śakti* is an entity that not only constitutes the essential attribute of the Supreme Being, called either Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, but one that remains in eternal companionship with the Lord.¹ *Śakti* has been both deified and personified in the Vaiṣṇava literature. While the early school of Vaiṣṇavism conjured up Lakṣmī² as an embodiment of *śakti* or, more properly, *vaiṣṇavī-śakti*, the mediaeval school made Kṛṣṇa an intimate associate of Rādhā who is supposed to represent that mystic power of God (*hlādinī śakti*) whereby everything is delighted.

Let us first restate the cardinal point of Vaiṣṇava philosophy with a view to emphasise the fact that all

¹ Śrīharṣa in his benedictory verse of the Khaṇḍanakhāṇḍakhāḍya speaks of Umā as one who is ever in the embrace of the Lord. ईश्वरमुमया न परं चन्द्रेऽनुमयापि तमधिगतम् । This unique form, generally known as अर्द्धनारीश्वरमूर्ति, is contemplated to be the symbol of Supreme Joy (*paramānandarūpa*).

² Lakṣmī is mentioned as consort of Viṣṇu in the *parīṣiṣṭa* portion of the Rgveda.

beings might be described as particles of *śakti* emanating from the all-powerful God. Unlimited as our view of *śakti* has been to all intents and purposes, the above point will no doubt be consonant with our interpretation of *śaktivāda*. In accordance with the Vaiṣṇava interpretation, beings in their individual aspects intrinsically form parts of Brahman. The relation between the two is the same as exists between the whole and the parts. This is said to be a kind of difference without distinction. These parts are said to resemble the rays emanating from the sun and might be looked upon as sparks issuing forth from fire. This simile, as we have already observed, has been a well-chosen one and made use of by different schools to explain the relation between *jīvas* and *Īśvara*. That beings are no better than parts in their relation to the great harmonious system is an idea which also found expression in the *Gītā*.¹ Though fragments of one complete whole, beings partake of some qualities like eternality and powerfulness that are attributed to the primal type from which they are copied.

Vaiṣṇava literature, from the ancient *Pāñcarātra-saṃhitās* to the works of the modern school of Vaiṣṇavism, presents an interesting picture in which God is permanently associated with His *śakti*, either in the person of *Lakṣmī* or *Rādhā*.² The *Sāṃkhya* doctrine of non-difference between *śakti* and *śaktimān* seems to have received wholehearted approval of the Vaiṣṇava school. The *Brahmasaṃhitā*, to begin with, considers God to be encircled by numerous *śaktis*, each embodying a particular

¹ ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।—*Gītā*, XIV. 7.

² Names of *Rādhā* and other *Gopīs* occur in the *Bhaviṣyottara*, *Skanda*, *Padma* and other *Purāṇas*.

aspect, in the eternally blissful region of Goloka¹. The Lord is said to be always in a sporting mood with His *śaktis* which, in essence, are parts of His own divine self and consist of the same stuff, *viz.*, Joy. The dependence of *śakti* on *śaktimat* is also brought to light when it is stated that *śakti* (Durgā) causes the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world only under the direction and guidance of the Lord². The last resort of Viṣṇu, known as *śeṣa*, is called *ādhāra-śakti* in which the Lord enjoys His mystic slumber (*yoganidrā*) at the time of deluge.³ One point to which our particular attention has been drawn by this *Samhitā* is that God in His effulgent and purest form cannot have any connection with the unconscious *prakṛti*. One who is *ātmārāma* or *ānanda* itself delights only in His own *śakti* that is virtually inseparable from Him.⁴

The *Jayākhyasamhitā* speaks of four kinds of *śakti*, namely, Lakṣmī, Kīrti, Jayā and Māyā, who remain ever present in the proximity of the Lord.⁵ These divine powers are always at the service of the Lord. Of

¹ आनन्दचिन्मयरसप्रतिभाविताभिस्ताभिर्य एष निजरूपतया कलाभिः ।

गोलोके एव निवसत्यखिलात्मभूतो गोविन्दमादिपुरुषं तमहं भजामि ॥—

Brahmasamhitā, IV. 37.

and शोभितं शक्तिभिस्ताभिरद्भुताभिः समन्ततः ।—Op. cit.

² Op. cit. IV. 44. Jivagosvāmin has here quoted a verse purposely to show that God comprises in Himself the power of functioning everything (त्वमकरणः स्वराडखिलकारकशक्तिधरः—*Bhāgavata*).

³ आधारशक्तिमवलम्ब्य परां स्वमूर्तिम्—Op. cit.

⁴ आत्मना रमया रेमे त्यक्तकालं सिद्ध्यया ।—Op. cit.

⁵ लक्ष्मीः कीर्तिर्जया माया देव्यस्तस्याश्रिताः सदा ।

स्वशक्तिनिचयोपेता निराकारास्तु निष्कलाः ॥—*Jayākhyā*. 6. 77.

The *Sāttvatasamhitā* has mentioned four *śaktis* called divine power :

शक्तिः सा चातुरात्मीया त्वैश्वरीत्यभिधीयते ।—

these Lakṣmī is held pre-eminently the greatest power, being an embodiment of *aśvarya-śakti* which is one of the six attributes that go to qualify the Lordship of God. Lakṣmī is inseparably connected with the Lord, just as rays and waves are with the sun and the ocean respectively.¹

This Saṃhitā has also referred to the supreme power with the help of which God effects the creation of the world, depicting God as one whose essence is *śakti* and who possesses all kinds of *śakti*.²

We have already spoken of Rādhā as an embodiment of *śakti*. In estimating the real significance of Rādhā, we should particularly bear in mind that, as a divinity, Rādhā stands for the supreme power of the Lord and has no separate existence apart from that of Kṛṣṇa.³ She is nothing, if not the Lord Himself in His fulness of joy. The Nārada-pañcarātra has not only mentioned the names of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, but has described the latter as the most conspicuous one among the host of Kṛṣṇa's favourites. The extent to which Rādhā has been exalted by the Vaiṣṇavas will be clear from the extensive literature we have under review. She is said to have her seat in the heart of Kṛṣṇa. While Durgā, as a female divinity, is considered to be the greatest among all embodiments of *śakti*, Rādhā is regarded as the most

¹ सूर्यस्य रश्मयो यद्दूर्मयश्चाम्बुधेरिव ।

सर्वैश्वर्यप्रभावेन कमला श्रीपतेस्तथा ॥—Op. cit.

This simile has been frequently made use of by the Śāktas and the Śaivas to bring out the non-difference between *śakti* and the object that possesses it.

² शक्त्यात्मकः स भगवान् सर्वशयुष्वृहितः ।—Op. cit. 6. 223.

³ एकात्मनावपि भुवि पुरा देहभेदं गतौ तौ ।—Rūpa Gosvāmin.

prominent one among the beloved of Kṛṣṇa.¹ It is the *śakti* of Viṣṇu that is called Nārāyaṇī, since she is in eternal love with Nārāyaṇa, and called Vaiṣṇavī because she constitutes the supreme power of Viṣṇu.² As one that represents all shades of *śakti*, Rādhā is calculated to be the primordial element that manifests itself in the ever-joyful companion of the Lord.³ She is one with the Lord having emanated from the left side of His divine body.⁴ To the Vaiṣṇavas Rādhā is thus a *śakti* of mysterious significance. Her character strikingly corresponds with that of the Lord. She is as pure and divine as the Lord Himself. A perfect identity has been shown between the two, so far as their real nature is concerned. Just as one will find the very identity of Brahman in the person of Kṛṣṇa, so one will find in Rādhā the pure *Brahmaśakti* having no touch with *māyā*.⁵ She is as much a Reality as the Lord Himself, personating the eternal power that abides in our heart.⁶ The force of this statement is to insist upon the fact that Rādhā is not a creation of imagination or mythology. She is far from being fictitious. Rādhā is rightly styled *paradevatā*⁷ (supreme divinity)

¹ यथा छन्दसि गायत्री दुर्गा शक्तिमतीष्वपि ।

... .. राधा कृष्णप्रियासु च ॥—N. Pañcarātra, 1. 34.

of. सर्वगोपीषु सैवेका विष्णोरत्यन्तबल्लभा ।—Padmapurāṇa.

² नारायणप्रिया शश्वत्तेन नारायणी श्रुतौ ।

विष्णोरहं परा शक्तिं विष्णुमाया च वैष्णवी ॥—N. Pañcarātra, 1. 34.

³ रासेश्वरी च सर्वाद्या सर्वशक्तिस्वरूपिणी ।—Op. cit.

⁴ कृष्णवामांशसम्भूता बभूव छन्दरी पुरा ।—Op. cit.

⁵ यथा ब्रह्मस्वरूपश्च श्रीकृष्णः प्रकृतेः परः ।

तथा ब्रह्मस्वरूपा च निर्लिप्ता प्रकृतेः परा ॥—Op. cit.

⁶ न कृत्रिमा च सा नित्या सत्यरूपा यथा हरिः ।

प्राणाधिष्ठात्री या देवी राधारूपा च सा मुने ॥—Op. cit.

⁷ देवी कृष्णमयी प्रोक्ता राधिका परदेवता ।—Bṛhadgautamīya.

since she has perfect identity with Kṛṣṇa and represents the essence of the all-delighting power of the Lord.¹

The Nārada-pañcarātra, like all treatises on *yoga*, has shown the mystic process whereby a spiritual aspirant attempts to unite the supreme *śakti* (generally called *cit-śakti*), supposed to be residing in the *mūlādhāra*, with the Supreme Being.² This act of combining *jīva-śakti* with *Īśvara-śakti* is what is earnestly sought by most of the *sādhakas* to attain the consummation of *yoga*.

Lakṣmī is said to be the imperishable power of Viṣṇu. As embodiment of *cit-śakti*, they cannot be distinguished from each other. The Hayaśīrṣa-pañcarātra has compared them with the eternal *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. So intimate is the relation between the two that one cannot remain a single moment without the other.³

The Gopālatāpinī⁴ has not only explicitly mentioned the name of Rādhā but has applied such epithets to Kṛṣṇa (गोपीजनबल्लभ, रुक्मिणीकान्त and रमामानसहंस) as would unmistakably imply that the Lord had Gopīs, Rukmini and Lakṣmī as His favourite consorts. That Lakṣmī

¹ ह्लादिनी या महाशक्तिः सर्वशक्तिवरीयसी ।

तत्सारभावरूपेयमिति तन्त्रे प्रतिष्ठिता ॥—Paddmapurāṇa.

² शम्भूना तां परां शक्तिमेकीभावं विचिन्तयेत् ।—N. Pañcarātra.

This line without any alteration also occurs in the Gautamiya Tantra, 34. 57.

³ परमात्मा हरिर्देवस्तच्छक्तिः श्रीरिहोदिता ।

श्रीदेवी प्रकृतिः प्रोक्ता केशवः पुरुषः स्मृतः ॥

न विष्णुना विना देवी न हरिः पद्मजां विना ।—Hayaśīrṣa-pañcarātra.

⁴ The Gopālatāpinī is, in all appearance, a work which ought to be treated more as a treatise on the Pañcarātra school than an authentic Upaniṣad. It contains not only the *kāmabīja* as well as the famous *mantra* consisting of eighteen syllables but has explicitly referred to the Pañcarātra doctrine of four *Vyūhas*.

is nobody else than the Lord's own *śakti* has been clearly pointed out by the Bhāgavata.¹

Valuable informations regarding some important aspects of *śaktivāda* are available in the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā. It cannot be denied that the recognition of *śakti* in its supreme aspect had some influence in the formation of the Pāñcarātra doctrines relating to the Godhead and the universe. The Ahirbudhnyasamhitā begins with a salutation to the *śakti* of Hari with her fivefold function and shining with the moon on her forehead.² *Parabrahman*, as contemplated by this Samhitā, is not absolutely *nirguṇa* but one that comprises all power (*sarvaśakti*) and sublime qualities.³ He is called *Bhagavān* on account of His possessing six superhuman qualities, and *Vāsudeva* in consequence of His residing in all creatures.⁴ Sudarśana, the disc held by Viṣṇu, has been conjured up by this Samhitā as an emblem

1 एवः प्रपन्नवरदो रमयात्मशक्त्या यद् यत् करिष्यति गृहीतगुणावतारः ।—

Bhāgavata.

2 पञ्चबिन्दुं हरेः शक्तिं पञ्चकृत्यकरीं नुमः ।—

पञ्चकृत्य, as we find in the Śaiva Tantras, are as follows : सर्ग-स्थिति-संहार-तिरोभाव-अनुग्रह. The Lord Śiva is generally known as पञ्चकृत्यकारी ।

3 अप्राकृतगुणस्पर्शमप्राकृतगुणास्पदम् ।—Op. cit. II. 24.

Rāmānuja's characterisation of Brahman as expressed in his inimitable language (ब्रह्मशब्देन स्वभावतो निरस्तनिखिलदोषोऽनवधिकातिशयासंख्येयकल्याण-गुणगणः पुरुषोत्तमोऽभिधीयते) seems to be an echo of this idea.

4 षड्गुण्यगुणयोगेन भगवान् परिकीर्तितः ।

समस्तभूतवासित्वाद्वासुदेवः प्रकीर्तितः ॥—Op. cit. II. 28.

The very word Bhagavān, as an epithet of Vāsudeva, brings to our mind the notion of an omnipotent personality, the master of sixfold virtue.

ज्ञानशक्तिबलैश्वर्यवीर्यतेजांस्यशेषतः ।

भगवच्छब्दवाच्यानि विना हेयैर्गुणादिभिः ॥—

Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6. 5. 79.

of *śakti* or divine power (यत्तत्सामर्थ्यमैश्वरम्). It is described as a symbol of Viṣṇu's power, or, more properly, Viṣṇu's independent desire (*sankalpa*) that operates freely without suffering from any limitations of time and space.

Then the enumeration of षड्गुण्य together with the definition of each *guṇa* is given with a view to show how unlimited and manifold the power of God is. We must not lose sight of the fact that these *guṇas*, though distinctly separate in their enumeration, are nothing but different aspects of *śakti*. It is through the operation of *śakti* that Brahman gets itself manifested into manifold forms.¹ Our attention is drawn to the fact that knowledge or pure consciousness is not only a mere quality that pertains to the Supreme Being, but it is exactly what constitutes the very essence of His inexplicable form.² We find it emphatically stated that knowledge is decidedly the greatest of all the *guṇas* enumerated above and the rest are only subservient to, or properties of, knowledge.³

The question is next raised as to how Brahman assumes षड्गुण्य or becomes a composite of six divine qualities through the instrumentality of his own *śakti*, and what the real nature of that *śakti* is.⁴ The answer of this question will necessitate a recapitulation of what we stated in the introductory pages. As to the nature of *śakti* in its material aspect, we are told that *śakti* is a quality or a state of things which is

1 षड्गुण्यं तत् परं ब्रह्म स्वशक्तिपरिवृद्धितम् ।—A. Saṃhitā, II. 32.

2 ज्ञानमेव परं रूपं ब्रह्मणः परमात्मनः ।—Op. cit.

The Śivasūtra also describes *ātmā* (Soul) as *caitanya* or consciousness.

3 एते शक्त्यादयः पञ्च गुणा ज्ञानस्य कीर्त्तिताः ।—Op. cit.

4 A. Saṃhitā, III. 1.

not practically distinguishable from the substance in which it inheres. The *śakti* of all things is said to be unthinkable and at the same time inseparable, its real identity being far beyond our observation. It is apprehended by its operations and particularly by the result produced therefrom. To be more clear, *śakti* is the most subtle state or essence of all things.¹ It is an entity too delicate to admit of any definition.

Concerning the divine power of God, the *Samhitā* holds the very same view as we find in the *Purāṇas* and the *Tantras*. *Śakti* or *parā śakti* is not detached from God but intimately associated with Him. The relation between Brahman and *śakti* has been well illustrated by a reference to the relation in which the moon stands to its beams.² It is further stated that *śakti* constitutes the active power of the Lord; it represents His supreme independence (स्वातन्त्र्यशक्ति) as manifests itself in all phenomena of the world.³ It

¹ शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्या अपृथक्स्थिता ।

स्वरूपे नैव दृश्यन्ते दृश्यन्ते कार्य्यतस्तु ताः ॥

सूत्रमावस्था हि सा तेषां सर्वभावानुगामिनी ।—Op. cit.

cf. शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्यज्ञानगोचराः ।—Viṣṇupurāṇa, I. 3. 2.

² एवं भगवत्तत्त्वस्य परस्य ब्रह्मणो मुने ।

सर्वभावानुगा शक्तिर्योत्स्नेव हिमदीधिते ॥—A. Samhitā, III. 5.

cf. चन्द्रस्य चन्द्रिकेवेयं शिवस्य सहजा शिवा ।—

³ भावाभावानुगा तस्य सर्वकार्य्यकरी विभोः ।

स्वातन्त्र्यरूपा सा विष्णोः प्रस्फुरन्ती जगन्मयी ॥—Op. cit. III. 5.

The divine power is called स्वातन्त्र्यशक्ति because it does not require anything else in the matter of illuminating or manifesting itself as well as other things (यदयं स्वस्य परस्य वा प्रकाशने परं नापेक्षते इति—Tikā under Tantrāloka, I. 62.). स्वातन्त्र्यशक्ति (अहं प्रत्यवमर्श) happens to be the singular glory of God (स्वातन्त्र्यमेतन्मुख्यं तदैश्वर्य्यं परमात्मनः) that accounts for His infinite varieties of *śaktis* (तेन स्वातन्त्र्यशक्तैव युक्त इत्याञ्जसो विधिः ।—Tantrāloka, I. 67.). The assumption of both *śakti* and *śaktimat* does not, however, go against the monistic standpoint maintained by the Śaivas (तेनाद्वयः स एवापि शक्तिमत्परिकल्पने ।—Tantrāloka, I. 69.).

is not at all a distinct entity but is one with, and inseparable from, the Lord.¹

Then the *Samhitā* goes on to give the signification of the various names of *śakti* such as आनन्दा, स्वतन्त्रा, नित्या, व्यापिनी, पूर्णा, लक्ष्मी, श्री, पद्मा, कमला, विष्णुशक्ति, कुण्डलिनी, अनाहता, गायत्री, माता and so on. All these epithets, gathered from different treatises, are said to be significant and intended to bring out the immense glory of *śakti*, generally known as *Vaiṣṇavī*.

Our attention is next focussed upon the exalted position that has been assigned to the *śakti* of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. This *śakti* emanating, as it does, from the body of Viṣṇu is a divinity of supreme importance that permeates the whole sphere of existence. The real nature of *śakti* seems to have been vividly presented to us by comparing *śakti*, though somewhat poetically, with the calmness of the ocean, the expanse of the sky, the luminosity of the sun and the beams of the moon.

उदधेरिव च स्थैर्यं महत्तेव विहायसः ।
 प्रमेव दिवसेशस्य ज्योत्स्नेव हिमदीधितेः ॥
 विष्णोः सर्वाङ्गासम्भूता भावाभावानुगामिनी ।
 शक्तिर्नारायणी दिव्या सर्वसिद्धान्तसम्मता ॥

A. *Samhitā*, III. 23-24

Śakti is also described as a distinct entity from *śaktimat*.² This difference which tends to make *śakti*

- ¹ या सा शक्तिर्जगद्धातुः कथिता समवायिनी ।—A. *Samhitā*,
 and आत्मभूता हि या शक्तिः परस्य ब्रह्मणो मुने ।—Op. cit. IV. 4.
- ² देवाच्छक्तिमतो भिन्ना ब्रह्मणः परमेष्ठिनः ।—A. *Samhitā*,
 and शक्तेः शक्तिमतो भेदाद्वाच्यदेव इतीर्यते ।—Op. cit. IV. 29.

only a property inhering in matters is based upon the conviction regarding the dual aspects of धर्म and धर्मी (quality and the substratum of quality). Lakṣmī, viewed in this light, is an embodiment of स्वातन्त्र्यशक्ति that belongs to the Lord.¹ This power of independence symbolised by Lakṣmī is again said to be of two kinds, namely, activity (*kriyā*) and glory (*bhūti*).² It is further stated that the activity of Viṣṇu which runs unobstructed in all spheres is represented by *Sudarśana* and the glory of the Lord reveals itself in the shape of the world (time, indiscrete and *puruṣa*).³

What follows next is a lengthy account relating to the creation and dissolution of the world. We find here a great array of facts concerning both evolution and involution of the universe. These two processes, we must remember, have been suitably compared to the revelation (उन्मेष) and absorption (निमेष) of *śakti*.⁴ The description of dissolution (*pralaya*) is given first. It is interesting to follow the courses of involution in which all elements get themselves gradually reduced to their next higher stages and finally arrive at their ultimate source. The scene presented before us is one of total effacement and the order shewn is just contrary to that of evolution. It is said: everything, at the time of utter annihilation, enters into the earth, the earth into water, water into light, light into air, air into the sky, the sky into self-sense

¹ स्वातन्त्र्येण स्वरूपेण विष्णुपत्नीयमङ्गता ।—Op. cit.

² लक्ष्मीमयः समुन्मेषः स द्विधा व्यवतिष्ठते ।

क्रियाभूतिविभेदेन... .. ॥—Op. cit.

³ या क्रिया नाम संकल्पः स सुदर्शननामवान् ।

भूतिर्नाम जगद्रूपा कालाव्यक्तपुमात्मिका ॥—Op. cit. VIII, 31.

⁴ उदितानुदिताकारा निमेषोन्मेषरूपिणी ।—Op. cit.

(*ahamkāra*), self-sense into intelligence, intelligence into *tamas*, *tamas* into *rajas*, *rajas* into *sattva*, *sattva* into *kāla* (time), *kāla* into destiny, destiny into *śakti*, *śakti* into *puruṣa*, *puruṣa* into Aniruddha, Aniruddha into Pradyumna, Pradyumna into Saṁkarṣaṇa and Saṁkarṣaṇa into Vāsudeva¹. Vāsudeva who is thus shown to be the last point (अव्यक्ततत्त्व)² in the scale of involution might in a reverse way be described as the starting-point in so far as the process of evolution is concerned. In connection with the successive stages of involution, mention has been made of various kinds of *śakti* such as the power of elasticity (स्थितिशक्ति), the power of movement (स्पन्दमयी शक्ति), the power of self-sense (अहंता) and so on. *Kālī* is said to be the symbol of a power that pertains to *kāla* (time).³ *Śakti*, called *mahāvidyā*, is said to have her position far above the region of Destiny. It is also stated that Destiny is devoured by *śakti* in consequence of the will of God. Men can, however, transcend Destiny and get entry into the realm of *śakti*, if they are so ordained by the Lord. A stage even higher than this is also conceived where *śakti* too gets herself submerged in *Puruṣa*. In this sublime plane *śakti* becomes आत्तसारा,⁴ i.e., stripped of all names and forms. The three *vyūhas*⁵ lose themselves successively into Vāsudeva—the primal reality and the remotest cause of the universe—and the Lord Himself assumes the indeterminate form of Brahman. A state of such absolute desolation or

¹ अच्येति भगवन्तं तं वासुदेवं सनातनम् ।—Op. cit. V. 68.

² तदव्यक्तमिति ज्ञेयम्—op. cit. and अनिर्देश्यं परं ब्रह्म वासुदेवोऽवतिष्ठते ।—op. cit.

³ काली कालगता शक्तिः—Op. cit.

⁴ आत्तसारा तदा शक्तिर्जहाति व्यक्तिनामनी ।—Op. cit.

⁵ The three *vyūhas*, namely, सङ्कर्षण, प्रद्युम्न and अनिरुद्ध, are said to be symbols of *śakti* (एते शक्तिमया व्यूहा गुणोन्मेषस्वतन्त्राः ।—IV. 18.).

voidness will remind one of the theme of the famous *nāsadiya-sūkta*¹ and Manu's description of the chaotic scene preceding the creation.² The whole account is brought to a close with the observation that Sudarśana, the emblem of Viṣṇu's power, lies at the root of all activities that bring about the wholesale destruction of the world.

From the account given above one will find many interesting things bearing upon the doctrine of *śakti*. What particularly engrosses our attention is the fact that the divine power, called *ahantā*, remains in full operation till the plane of Saṃkarṣaṇa is reached.³ But it ceases to be active and distinct from the Lord as soon as the manifoldness of the world disappears leaving nothing but the inexplicable unity of God. It is in this supreme moment that *śakti* or *Vaiṣṇavī-śakti* becomes *Brahmasvarūpiṇī*, being one and absolutely identical with Brahman.⁴ We are simply struck with wonder to see how strictly the Pāñcarātrāgama has maintained the non-dualistic standpoint by co-ordinating *śakti* and *śaktimat* into a harmonious and indivisible unity.⁵ The key-note of the Pāñcarātra tenets, we mean the absolute non-difference between *śakti* and *śaktimat*, is thus stated :—

नैव शक्त्या विना कश्चिच्छक्तिमानस्ति कारणम् ।

न च शक्तिमता शक्तिं विनैकाप्यवतिष्ठते ॥

A. Samhitā, VI. 3.

¹ Rgveda, X. 129.

² Manusāmbhitā, I. 5.

³ A. Samhitā, IV. 73.

⁴ ब्रह्मभावं व्रजत्येवं सा शक्तिर्वैष्णवी परा ।

नारायणः परं ब्रह्म शक्तिर्नारायणी च सा ॥—Op. cit.

⁵ व्यापकावतिसंश्लेषादेकं तत्त्वमिव स्थितौ ।—Op. cit.

An account of creation is given in the next chapter. At the very outset, the *Samhitā* speaks of two kinds of creation, namely, pure and impure which may roughly answer to the evolution of the intellectual and material worlds. The account is, however, prefaced with a description of the indeterminate condition or quiescence in which *Nārāyaṇa* or Brahman is supposed to remain before the world takes a definite shape after *pralaya*. This serves to imprint upon our mind the picture of a horrible emptiness in which all matters and activities are totally destroyed and there prevails a state of grim equality setting at naught all sorts of difference and manifoldness. The Supreme Reality—the final substratum of all—alone survives this desolation, taking back everything unto itself and assuming the likeness of a limitless sky without any disturbance caused by the movement of air.¹ We should not, however, forget that this stillness following the scene of voidness is also capable of being interpreted as a form of *śakti*.²

To discover the seed of creation, we are asked to turn to the divine power of the Lord (*Lakṣmī*), usually called स्वातन्त्र्यशक्ति, which forms His own self (आत्मभूता) and reveals itself or becomes determinate for reasons not known to us.³ And this revelation of *śakti* consequent upon the Lord's independent desire ought to be regarded as the real origin of creation. *Śakti* is said to make her appearance in the vast empty

1 प्रह्लाखिलकार्यं यत् सर्वतः समतां गतम् ।

नारायणः परं ब्रह्म सर्वावासमनाहृतम् ॥

पूर्वास्तिमितवाङ्मगुणमसमीराम्बरोपमम् ।—Op. cit. IV. 2-3.

2 तस्य स्तौमित्यरूपा या शक्तिः शून्यत्वरूपिणी ।—Op. cit.

3 स्वातन्त्र्यादेव कस्माच्चित् क्वचित् सोन्मेषमृच्छति ।—Op. cit.

space just like a flash of lightning in the sky.¹ The awful void is then filled up, to a certain extent, by the creation of the worlds of matters and spirits. This is, in short, the prologue to the world-drama.

A seed, little though it is, does not fail to impress upon us how a tiny and insignificant thing may contain so much power in it as to produce a large tree in course of time. The power underlying this simple phenomenon is almost the same as is exhibited by the sacred syllables (*bījas*) which a large section of the religious-minded Hindus utter with utmost reverence. A *bīja* illustrates the mystic way how the power of a god might be concentrated into a syllable. As is well known to us all, every god has a corresponding *bīja* with which he is intimately associated. This sacred syllable is conjured up as the positive symbol of a divinity. In it the deity is supposed to be lying in a subtle form.

The Gautamiya-Tantra, like all other similar treatises, has shewn the mystery involved in the constitution of the *bīja* and the *mantra* appertaining to the Lord Kṛṣṇa. It describes the power of the Lord in glowing terms as subtle, supreme and eternal and as one that awakens the pure consciousness.² While the Lord is held to be the seed of the world, His divine power, known either as *māyā* or *prakṛti*, is called *guṇamayī* (consisting of three *guṇas*) as well as unborn.³ The Lord is depicted as surrounded by eight

¹ आत्मभूता हि या शक्तिः परस्य ब्रह्मणो हरेः ॥

देवी विद्युदिव व्योम्नि क्वचिदुद्योतते तु सा ।

शक्तिर्विद्योतमाना सा शक्तिरित्युच्यतेऽम्बरे ॥—Op. cit.

² एषा शक्तिः परा सूक्ष्मा नित्या सम्विद्प्रदायिनी ।—G. Tantra, II. 10.

³ ईश्वरो जगतां बीजं शक्तिर्गुणमयी त्वजा ।—Op. cit.

śaktis representing His eight divine powers.¹ Among these Lakṣmī is said to constitute the Lord's supreme power (*parā śakti*) and divine grace.²

Lakṣmī also figures as an embodiment of divine power in the Purāṇas specially affiliated to the Vaiṣṇava school. Viṣṇupurāṇa to which we have several times referred in the foregoing pages describes Lakṣmī as the imperishable power of the Lord. She is called the *Matrix* of the world (*jagannātā*) and one who is as omnipresent and eternal as the Lord Himself.³ Lakṣmī is said to be the purest form of *śakti*, untouched by the turbid atmosphere of the world and never subjected to the whims of time and other factors.⁴ She follows the Lord just like a shadow and remains ever a faithful and constant partner in all His incarnations, personating Sītā and Rukmiṇī as associated with Rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively.⁵ Lakṣmī is significantly called *svarūpaśakti* in order to lay emphasis upon the fact of her absolute identity with the Lord. But this identity in the face of apparent difference of personalities may give rise to some confusion and objection, because the designation like लक्ष्मीपति which purports to make the Lord the loving consort of Lakṣmī will put a difficulty in the way of maintaining the strict non-difference between the

1 केशरेण्वष्टशक्तिश्च चाष्टप्रकृतिरूपिणीः ।—Op. cit.

2 इयं लक्ष्मीः परा शक्तिर्विश्वानुग्रहरूपिणी ।—Op. cit.

3 नित्यैव सा जगन्माता विष्णोः श्रीरनपायिनी ।

यथा सर्वगतो विष्णुस्तथैवेयं द्विजोत्तम —V. Purāṇa, 1. 8. 15.

4 कलाकाष्ठानिमेवादिकालसूत्रस्य गोचरे ।

यस्य शक्तिर्न शुद्धस्य प्रसीदतु स नो हरिः ॥—Op. cit.

5 एवं यथा जगत्स्वामी देवदेवो जनादनः ।

अवतारं करोत्येषा तथा श्रीस्तत्सहायिनी ॥

राघवत्वेऽभवत्सीता रुक्मिणी कृष्णजन्मनि ।—op. cit.

two.¹ This objection has been, however, turned down by holding that the difference of language is not really intended to create any distinction between the Lord and what is denominated as His *svarūpaśakti*. Our mode of expression is responsible for this seeming difference.

One of the conspicuous contributions of the Viṣṇupurāṇa which has afforded so much food for the speculations of the later school of Vaiṣṇavism seems to have been the mention of a trio of *śakti* corresponding to the three distinguished aspects of Brahman, namely, Existence, Consciousness and Joy.² No impure qualities and pains can reside in one who represents शुद्धसत्त्व and the perfect embodiment of joy. Jīvagovāmin and his followers are of opinion that among these three *śaktis* (*sandhinī*, *saṃvit* and *hlādinī*) what comes next in order is superior to the preceding one. The *hlādinī* of which Rādhā is a glorious embodiment according to the later Vaiṣṇava interpretation has a unique character. Just as *mādhurya* (emotional Love) is held to be the most fascinating and joyful one among all varieties of sentiments (*rasa*), so *hlādinī* looms prominent among the trinity of *śakti* recognised by the Vaiṣṇavas.³

¹ प्रोच्यते परमेशो यो यः शुद्धोप्युपचारतः ।—op. cit.

ननु यदि लक्ष्मीस्तत्स्वरूपाभिन्ना कथं तर्हि लक्ष्म्याः पतिरित्युच्यते इति ।

यः शुद्धः केवलोऽपि उपचारतो भेदविवक्षया प्रोच्यते ॥—Śrīdharaśvāmin.

The Bhāgavata has shown the difference between *svarūpaśakti* and *māyāśakti*. The former is just the same as the Lord Himself and leaves *māyāśakti* far aside by its supreme influence (मायां व्युदस्य चिच्छक्त्या कैवल्ये स्थित आत्मनि). By comparing स्वरूपशक्ति with the queen and मायाशक्ति with a maid-servant Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa has clearly shown the domination of the one over the other (पट्टमहिषीव स्वरूपशक्तिर्वह्निद्वारसेविकेव मायाशक्तिरित्युभयोर्महदन्तरम्).

² ह्लादिनी सन्निवनी सम्बित्तय्येका सर्वसंस्थितो ।—V. Purāṇa, 1. 12. 69.

³ cf. ह्लादिनी या महाशक्तिः सर्वशक्तिः वरीयसी ।

तत्सारभावभूतेयमिति तन्त्रे प्रतिष्ठिता ॥—Padmāpurāṇa.

Now we come to the Bhāgavata. It holds up before us the same glorious portrait of *śakti* as we generally find in all other kindred works. The truth revealed to us by the study of the doctrine of *śakti* appears to be practically the same in all branches of our literature. The Bhāgavata, in its interpretation of *śaktivāda*, occupies a place equal, if not superior, to that of the other Purāṇas. To begin with, the Bhāgavata has shown its explicit faith in the personality of God. And this personal God (*Bhagavān*—a composition of six noble virtues) is assumed to be One that possesses power to an incomprehensible extent. There is no one more glorious and powerful than the Lord. Whatever be our notion of the Godhead, it is quite clear that God is a supremely powerful Being. His power knows neither limitations nor decay. This is the central idea which has been so strongly advocated by the Bhāgavata in various ways. We cannot, however, afford to forget that the Bhāgavata bears a Vedāntic outlook all throughout creating no impassable barrier between *śakti* and *śaktimat*.¹

First, the word *Bhagavān* which the Bhāgavata has more preferentially and frequently used than the words *Brahman*² and *paramātman* is noticed to bring with it the idea of a Being possessing immense and various powers. We must remember here that one that has neither equal nor second comes to be called *Bhagavān* only when it manifests itself in a conceivable form by virtue of its innate power (*svarūpaśakti*).³ His *svarūpaśakti* which is

¹ सर्ववेदान्तसारं हि श्रीभागवतमिष्यते ।—Bhāgavata, XII. 13. 15.

It was in all appearance to attest the non-duality of the Godhead that the Bhāgavata has referred to the अद्वयज्ञानतत्त्व in the beginning.

वदन्ति तत्तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ञज्ञानमद्वयम् ।

ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दयते ॥—op cit. I. 2. 11.

² Jīvagosvāmin has tried to show how, according to the different modes of *sādhana*, one and the same reality attains these distinctive designations. The Supreme Being is called *Brahman* by those *Paramahamsas* who meditate upon God as an indivisible unity failing to grasp the mysterious and innate powers of the Lord.

³ अथ तदेकं तत्त्वं स्वरूपभूतयैव शक्त्या कमपि विशेषं धर्तुं परासामपि शक्तीनां मूलाश्रयरूपं ... विविकतादृशशक्तिशक्तिमत्ताभेदेन प्रतिपद्यमानं वा भगवानिति शब्दयते —Bhāgavatsandarbhā.

of such a great magnitude as to nullify all activities of *māyā* represents nothing but His own self. There is clear evidence in the Bhāgavata that the powers of God are natural (*ātmabhūta*) and not merely of an attributive character. Such a position has been maintained by the Bhāgavata without being inconsistent with the purely monistic ideal of the Vedānta.

On more than one occasion the Lord has been described as composite of all powers. That the Lord is one who comprises in Himself immense and various *śaktis* has been made sufficiently clear by numerous expressions such as विविधशक्ति, आत्मशक्ति, अतर्क्यसहस्रशक्ति, स्वच्छन्दशक्ति, अनन्तशक्ति, उरुशक्ति, चिच्छक्ति, अखिलकारकशक्तिधर and so on. God is said to perform the threefold function (creation, sustenance and destruction) by coming in touch with his own power (*māyā*).¹ He is again held to be both associated with, and detached from, *māyā-śakti*.² The association and detachment of this nature refer undoubtedly, as Śrīdhara-svāmin rightly observes, to the *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* aspects respectively.³ The Bhāgavata has applied both the epithets joyful and powerful to God without making any distinction between joy and power.⁴ To identify God with Joy and Joy alone is not, however, uncompromising with the fact of His possessing powers. *Śakti* and *ānanda* are not mutually conflicting but capable of being harmoniously blended together in the eternal person of God. One who is powerful can also be styled joyful without any contradiction. This is why Śrīkanṭha has used *ānanda-maya* as a significant substitute for *paramaśakti* (one that possesses supreme power).

God is again said to combine in Himself all kinds of *śakti-vidyā* as well as *avidyā*.⁵ He is a personality

¹ स्वशक्त्या मायया युक्तः सृजत्यक्तिं च पाति च ।—Bhāgavata, IV. 11. 26.

² युक्तं विरहितं शक्त्या गुणमय्यात्ममायया ।—op. cit. IV. 12. 6.

³ मायया युक्तं विरहितं च सगुणनिर्गुणभेदेन ।

⁴ आनन्दमात्र उपपन्नसमस्तशक्तौ—Bhāgavata, IV. 11. 30.

⁵ यस्मिन् विरुद्धगतयो ह्यनिशं पतन्ति विद्यादयो विविधशक्तय आनुपूर्व्या ।—op. cit. IV. 9. 16. and तस्मै समुन्नद्धनिरुद्धशक्तये नमः परस्मै पुरुषाय वेधसे ।—op. cit. IV. 17. 33.

wherein all incongruities and differences are resolved into a strange harmony. It is really difficult to imagine the true nature of God and still more so to determine the exact relation in which He stands to the *śaktis* that are ascribed to Him. But this is, we are told, not really an ascription because God's powers are looked upon as His essential and natural features. To speak the truth, God's power is God Himself.¹

The Bhāgavata, as we all know, found the highest Godhead in the person of Kṛṣṇa.² He is contemplated to be the eternal embodiment of Joy, Love and Beauty and one that takes delight in playing with His companions. The pious confidence with which the Bhāgavata has depicted the Lord in this light is remarkable. One cannot scrutinise the parts played by Kṛṣṇa in all the incidents connected with His mysterious life without being convinced of the unthinkable character of divine powers. Accompanied by His own power, the Lord is said to perform all that is attributed to Him.³ The *rāsa-līlā* which is intrinsically the secret act of *yogamāyā* or Vaiṣṇavī śakti presents a beautiful picture where the Lord is portrayed as One sporting with His own *śaktis* that are inseparable from His Divine Self. The Bhāgavata has incidentally referred to the eternal association between Śiva and Śakti.⁴

It is, however, strange that the name of Rādhā does not occur in the Bhāgavata. While other Purāṇas have referred to Rādhā as the glorious embodiment of the Lord's power (*hlādinī śakti*), it is curious enough that one that claims to be the most authoritative work of the Vaiṣṇava school does not even mention her name. The later Vaiṣṇava teachers have, however, discerned an allusion to Rādhā in the following verse of the Bhāgavata :

¹ In the estimation of the Vaiṣṇavas the boys and damsels of Vṛndāvana who had the singular fortune of being playmates of Kṛṣṇa are all eternal embodiments of the Lord's powers.

² अन्ये चांशकलाः पुंसः कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।—Op. cit.

³ एष प्रपन्नवरदो रमयात्मशक्त्या यद् यत् करिष्यति गृहीतगुणावतारः ।—

Op. cit. III. 9. 23.

⁴ शिवः शक्तियुतः शश्वत्—Op. cit. X. 88. 3.

अनयाराधितो नूनं भगवान् हरिरीश्वरः ।

यत्रो विहाय गोविन्दः प्रीतो यामनयद्रहः ॥—

Bhāgavata, X. 30. 28.

Jīvagōsvāmin and others have largely drawn upon the Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Bhāgavata adding very little to our knowledge of the subject. They have made much of the Divine *līlā* or the Lord's activities and particularly of the *hlādinī śakti*. Jīvagōsvāmin describes Rādhā as the brightest jewel among the whole host of the Lord's favourites.¹

¹ अथ सर्वसौभाग्यवतीमूर्धमणोः श्रीराधिकायाः etc.—Pṛtisandarbhā.

ŚAKTI IN ŚAIVA LITERATURE

The Śaiva literature or Śaivāgama¹ is fairly comprehensive and affords us valuable information regarding the salient features of *śaktivāda*. Traditions and narratives grown round the divinity of Śiva are numerous and belong to a remote period of Indian history. Reference has already been made to the antiquity and popularity of the Śiva-cult. Śiva or his sacred emblem seems to have been worshipped in India from a very early time. He is a divinity generally mentioned in the Vedas with such appellations as Rudra² and Īśāna.

The Śvetāśvataropaniṣad appears to be the first of its kind to bring to light the supremacy of the deity called Śiva.³ It has mentioned various names of Śiva such as Rudra, Maheśvara, Hara and Īśāna and describes the Lord, in conformity with the Upaniṣadik monism, as imperishable and all-pervading.⁴ While *pradhāna* or *māyā*

¹ The Śaivāgama has two broad divisions, namely, Kashmirian and South Indian, the latter being generally referred to as Siddhāntatantra. The Śaivas make no distinction between the Vedas and their scriptures, since both of them are considered to be the work of the same author, viz., Śiva. They do not believe in the non-personal origin of the Vedas and apply the term Śaivāgama to the Vedas without any reservation. Śrīkaṇṭha also speaks of two kinds of Śivāgama—the one (i.e., Vedas) meant for the three twice-born classes and the other intended to be studied by all (वयं तु वेदशिवागमयोर्भेदं न पश्यामः । वेदेऽपि शिवागम इति व्यवहारो युक्तः तस्य तत्कृतृकत्वात् । अतः शिवागमो द्विविधः—त्रैविणिकविषयः सर्वविषयश्चेति—Śrīkaṇṭha-bhāṣya under Ved. sūtra, 2. 2. 38).

There were different classes of the Śaiva Sects, namely, Śaiva, Virāśaiva, Pāśupāta, Kārūṇikasiddhāntin, Kāpālīka etc. See Bhāmati under the Ved. sūtra, 2. 2. 37. and the Sarvadarśanasamgraha.

² The names Tryambaka, Kṛttivāśas, Pinākin (Vāj. Sam III. 61.) and Kapardin are not also rare in the Vedic literature.

³ The Māṇḍūkya has laid stress upon the non-dual and quiescent character of Śiva and has identified Him with the mystic syllable (*praṇava*). शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कारः—M. 12. cf. शिवो वा प्रणवो ह्येष प्रणवो वा शिवस्तथा ।—Śivapurāṇa.

⁴ Śvetāśva, IV. 16.

is held to be liable to destruction (*kṣara*), the Lord Śiva is called *amṛta* or deathless.¹ It is this Upaniṣad which has particularly spoken of the supreme power of the Lord, and this reference to *śakti*, earliest in a sense, proved to be a source of great inspiration to the later schools of thought. The Kaivalyopaniṣad has gone a step further in elucidating the position of *śakti* by making Umā a close and constant companion of Śiva.² We must remember that the eternal association of Śiva with *śakti* is a matter of unique importance from the śākta point of view.

The Vāyusaṃhitā and the Śivapurāṇa, might be mentioned, among others, as the two authoritative works throwing much light upon the important phases of Śiva-tattva and incidentally upon Śaktitattva too. The Śaiva-bhāṣya of Śrīkaṇṭha, together with the Śivārkamanidīpikā thereon, is also worthy of mention in this connection. Decidedly the greatest stimulus to the spread of Śaiva doctrines came from the host of Śaiva teachers of Kashmir. It was in this holy land that a number of savants, counted from Vasugupta to Kṣemarāja, tried their level best to popularise the Śaivāgama by their voluminous productions. Their labours were fruitful in ushering a new school of *advaita* philosophy under the name Śivādvayavāda or Pratyabhijñādarśana. Just as the great Śaṃkara built up the splendid edifice of non-dualism on the foundation provided by the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtras and the Bhagavadgītā, so the *āgamikas* of Kashmir succeeded, of course in their own way, in setting up a school of *advaitism* on the materials supplied by the *āgamas*.

Now let us see how *śakti* fares in the Śivāgama. From our meagre knowledge of the Vāyusaṃhitā it appears that *śakti* constitutes the first event of importance in the order of evolution proceeding from the Almighty Śiva. *Śakti* was the primal thing to come out of the Great Cause and she was subsequently followed by *māyā*, *avyakta* and so

¹ क्षरं प्रधानममृताक्षरं हरः—op. cit.

² उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् ।—Kaivalya, 7. Śrīkaṇṭha in his Śaiva-bhāṣya seems to have been much profited by this passage.

on.¹ Śiva is said to be the material cause so far as the creation of all objects beginning with *māyā* is concerned. The point is made more clear by the statement that everything, from *śakti* to the world of matter, has its origin in the Śivatattva.² It is significant to note here that the Śivārkamanidīpikā has taken the word *śakti* as indicative of Śivatattva or *parā śakti*³ which alone permeates the whole universe. We can ill afford to forget that *śakti* in its supreme phase is not at all distinguishable from Śiva or, in other words, Śivatattva itself is essentially the same as Śaktitattva. The Vāyusamhitā has only touched upon the cardinal point of *śaktivāda* when it echoes the oft-quoted *śruti* (Śvetāśva, VI. 8.) and states that the Lord's power is supreme and manifold, manifesting itself in the form of consciousness and joy and shining as effulgently as the rays of the sun.⁴

The Śivapurāṇa, specially the sections called Vāyaviya-samhitā and Umāsamhitā, is a standard work on Śaivāgama and might be profitably studied as what gives us a detailed and authoritative account of *śaktivāda*. While following up the train of thought described in this Purāṇa, we come across many coherent materials as are necessary for framing a uniform idea about the true perspective of *śakti*. First, it graphically reproduces the narrative of Umā-Indra as found in the Kenopaniṣad and makes an attempt to show how it brings to light the supremacy of *śakti*. Then follows a somewhat lengthy dissertation relating to the real nature of Śiva and *śakti*. While *śakti* is styled *mahādevī* or Supreme Goddess, the Lord Śiva is called *śaktimān*, i.e. one who commands great

¹ शक्तिः प्रथमसम्भूता शान्त्यतीतपदोत्तरा ।

ततो माया ततोऽव्यक्तं शिवाच्छक्तिमतः प्रभोः ॥—V. samhitā.

² शक्त्यादि च पृथिव्यन्तं शिवतत्त्वसमुद्भवम् ।—Op. cit.

³ शक्तिशब्देन शिवतत्त्वरूपा परा शक्तिरुच्यते—under Ved. sūtra, 2. 2. 31.

⁴ परास्य विविधा शक्तिः प्रबोधानन्दरूपिणी ।

एकानेकस्वरूपेण भाति भानोरिव प्रभा ॥

power.¹ The whole world with all its wonders is said to magnify only an insignificant part of their divine glory. Things, subtle or gross, conscious or inert, pure or foul contain in their ultimate beginning the essence of these two *tattvas* (*Śiva* and *śakti*).² The universe might accordingly be called either *Śākta* or *Śaiva* in consequence of its emersion from a mystic combination of *Śiva* and *śakti*.³

An identity in difference is the next point to be particularly noted. This Purāṇa is emphatic upon the absolute non-difference between *Śiva* and *śakti*. It is said: Just as the moon-beams cannot be separated from the moon and the rays from the sun, so *śakti* cannot be distinguished from *Śiva*.⁴ They are mutually dependent upon each other and perfectly equal in nature.⁵ *Śakti*, either as *vidyā* or *avidyā*, is held to be only natural with *Śiva* who possesses innumerable powers.⁶ The whole trend of thought might be summed up in the following words: there can be no *Śiva* without *śakti* and no *śakti* without *Śiva*.⁷

The beautiful array of similitudes by which the relation between *Śiva* and *śakti* has been characterised deserves more than a passing notice. We feel tempted to mention a few of these. While all that is masculine, says the Purāṇa,⁸ comes from the Lord, all that is feminine

¹ शक्तिः सान्नान्महादेवी महादेवश्च शक्तिमान् ।

तयोविभूतिलेशो वै सवमेतच्चराचरम् ॥—Ś. Purāṇa (V. saṃhitā), 4. 4.

² अपरं च परं चैव द्वयं चिदविदात्मकम् ।

शिवस्य च शिवायाश्च स्वास्यं चैतत्स्वभावतः ॥—Op. cit.

³ शक्तिशक्तिमदुत्थं तु शाक्तं शैवमिदं जगत् ।—Op. cit.

⁴ चन्द्रो न खलु भात्येष यथा चन्द्रिकया विना ।

न भाति विद्यमानोऽपि तथा शक्त्या विना शिवः ॥—Op. cit.

⁵ एवं परस्परापेक्षा शक्तिशक्तिमतोः स्थिता ।—Op. cit.

⁶ शक्तिः स्वाभाविकी तस्य—Op. cit. and अनन्ताः शक्तयो यस्य इच्छाज्ञान-क्रियादयः ।—Op. cit.

⁷ न शिवेन विना शक्तिं न शक्त्या च विना शिवः ।—Op. cit.

⁸ शङ्करः पुरुषाः सर्वे स्त्रियः सर्वा महेश्वरो ।—Op. cit. Cf. Viṣṇupurāṇa, I. 8. 32.

evolves from the Goddess; while the former constitutes the subjective, the latter represents the objective; while the one is said to be the beholder and the knower, the other stands for all that is observed and known. They are as closely related together as day and night, time and space, the earth and the sky, the tree and the creeper and so on.

The Sivapurāṇa continues that *śakti* is one and supreme, an embodiment of consciousness as well as the creative principle of the world.¹ She is called *mūlaprakṛti* and *māyā* involving the three *guṇas*. At the time of utter annihilation, she ceases to be a distinct entity and becomes absolutely identical with the Lord only to appear again in an eventful hour.² Their identity as well as difference is a mystery which is not for the man to solve. Their oneness, however real and genuine, is said to be disturbed by the reactionary process of creation.

Reference has been made to the three kinds of divine powers, namely, *jñāna*, *icchā* and *kriyā*. The Purāṇa has shown how *nāda* emerges from *śakti* in consequence of a disruption brought about by *kriyāśakti* and how *bindu* arises from it leading in turn to the manifestation of Sadāśiva or the supreme Lord.³

It is said that one and the same *śakti* assumes different forms and appears manifold to our vision.⁴ The Purāṇa explicitly states that all divinities are personifications of *śakti*. It holds that Rudrāṇī, Vaiṣṇavi, Brahmāṇī, Aindrī,

¹ सैका परा च चिद्रूपा शक्तिः प्रसवधमिणी ।—Op. cit.

² शिवेच्छया परा शक्तिः शिवतत्त्वैकतां गता ।

ततः परिस्फुरत्यादौ सर्गे तैलं तिलादिव ॥—Op. cit.

³ ततः क्रियाख्यया शक्त्या शक्तौ शक्तिमदुत्थया ।

तस्यां विज्ञोभ्यमाणायामादौ नादः समुद्भवः ॥

नादाद्विनिःसृतो बिन्दुर्विन्दोर्देवः सदाशिवः ।—Op. cit.

cf. सच्चिदानन्दविभवात् सकलात् परमेश्वरात् ।

आसीच्छक्तिस्ततो नादो नादाद्बिन्दुसमुद्भवः ।—Śāradātīlaka, I. 7.

⁴ शक्तयः खलु भिद्यन्ते बहुधा व्यवहारतः ।—Op. cit.

etc. are all embodiments of *śakti*. The Purāṇa comes to the main point of interest by stating freely that the whole world is permeated by *śakti*, whatever we perceive being only a positive manifestation of nothing but *śakti*.¹

The Umāsaṃhitā, a section of the Śivapurāṇa, gives us almost the same narrative of *śakti* and her wonderful activities as we find in the Mārkaṇḍeya and other Purāṇas. The utterance of the Goddess appearing in the person of Umā is fraught with much significance and helps one to have a clear vision about the supreme character of *śakti*. Umā is introduced in all her glory as addressing the gods in the following words: I am the supreme Brahman, the Great Light and the sacred syllable (*praṇava*). I am all; nothing exists that does not partake of me. Though essentially formless, I assume forms and represent all that exists. Unthinkable are my qualities; I am eternal and appear in the dual forms of cause and effect. The so-called *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* are nothing but two aspects in which I manifest myself. I am both male and female. The deities like Kālīkā, Kamalā, Vāṇī, etc. are all embodiments of my *śakti* and have evolved out of my person.²

Śrīkaṇṭha, one of the leading exponents of the Śaivāgama, wrote his commentary on the Vedāntasūtras in a true Śaiva spirit. His expositions prove considerably illuminating in estimating the position of *śakti* in the Śaivāgama. *Śakti*, as we have stated elsewhere, occupies a conspicuous place in Śrīkaṇṭha's conception of Brahman.

¹ किमत्र बहुनोक्तेन यद्विश्वमिति कीर्तितम् ।

शक्त्यात्मनैव तद् व्याप्तं यथा देहोऽन्तरात्मना ॥—Op. cit.

² परं ब्रह्म परं ज्योतिः प्रणवद्वन्द्वरूपिणी ।

अहमेवास्मि सकलं मदन्वो नास्ति कश्चन ॥

निराकारापि साकारा सर्वतत्त्वस्वरूपिणी ,

अप्रतर्क्यगुणा नित्या कार्यकारणरूपिणी ॥

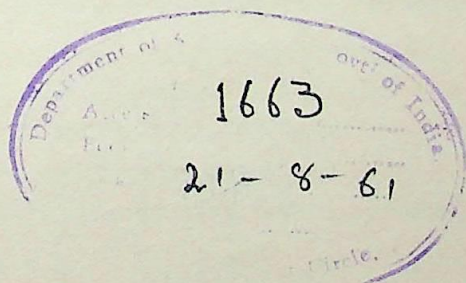
कदाचिद्व्यतिाकारा कदाचित् पुरुषाकृतिः ।

कालिका कमला वाणीमुखाः सर्वा हि शक्तयः ।

मदंशदेव संजातास्तथेमाः सकलाः कलाः ॥—Op. cit.

Though a strict *advaitin*, he always speaks of Brahman as one qualified by supreme power (परमशक्तिविशिष्ट). His main thesis is therefore one of qualified monism.

To determine what is actually meant by the word *sat* or ultimate reality (सदेव सौम्येदमग्र आसीत्—Chānd) has been a difficult problem to the Indian philosophers. Under the Ved. sūtra, 1.1.5, Śrīkaṇṭha has not only set aside the causality of unconscious *pradhāna*, as postulated by the Sāṃkhya, but has treated Brahman as the real substance that is denoted by the word *sat* and upon it one must look for both the material and efficient cause of the world. Moreover, he has made the word *sat* a strong argument in order to bring out the qualified nature of Brahman. According to his interpretation, the śruti *ekamevādvitīyam* is conclusive enough to prove that Brahman is qualified, i.e., possesses the quality of being one and without second or, in other words, Brahman is omnipotent and omniscient. Brahman in his characterisation is not *nirguṇa* or absolute but one that possesses supreme power of getting itself diversified into the countless varieties of phenomena.



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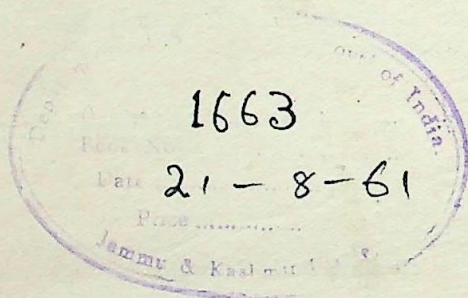
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